



## Young generation's call for intergenerational fairness through climate action

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As Coco Gauff<sup>1</sup> said: “Younger people are leading movements and the world has to get used to it. We are used to older people telling us what to do. My generation has just decided it was time to speak up on our own.”

Climate change is not “a new trend” despite the fact that it is getting massive media attention lately. Young people of different generations have been talking about climate change for decades, but our generation of protestors is louder and better coordinated than our predecessors. Youth movements not only in Europe but all over the globe are taking the lead in addressing and demanding changes in face of Climate emergency: youth-led demonstrations worldwide on 20 September 2019 on the occasion of the United Nation’s (UN) General Assembly in New York were the largest climate-protest ever in modern history. But what differs current manifestations from the past is that during those actions, teens (Generation Z) and young adults (Millennials) are no longer seen as victims who need to be protected from climate change but rather as key actors and stakeholders who are fighting for real change. A very strong and clear example is that representatives of young people and youth organizations can nowadays be seen in high level meetings defining ongoing politics. It was quite symbolic that on the occasion of the UN Youth Climate Summit when the Youth spoke and the adults in the room listened, with UN Secretary General António Guterres carrying the title of “keynote listener”. Even though this example is reflecting the willingness of global politics to listen to Millennials and Generation Z alike, it is also true that the alarming scientific predictions about the future have sharpened already existing divisions and tensions between Millennials, Gen Z and other generations. Against this backdrop, an approach based on intergenerational fairness approach is key to tackle climate emergency as it is not only affecting our future and those of future generations but also our present quality of life that transcends age differences.

Additionally, it should also be noticed that what the Youth is proposing is not only just pointing out the problem to decision-makers or being present at the discussion tables; as Youth we demand our voices and inputs to be heard, to have the platforms to influence political decision-making processes on local, national, and global levels. We, as Young people, do not only point out singular problems and issues to be addressed. Our approach is rather global as a globalized generation as we are. Our approach is also constructive and future-oriented as for us, long term climate strategies are valuable and essential for both policy-makers and private stakeholders to actively pursue. In addition to this it is also important to underline that those strategies cannot be limited to countries’ frontiers or even to unions, for them to be successfully implemented. A broader global strategy is required with the consensus of world leaders in sharing the sense of a common mission and that of political responsibility: implementing the necessary and urgent changes to protect the future of our planet. It is a given that today’s climate emergency requires radical measures and that long-term strategies and

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<sup>1</sup> US tennis player

policies will require a deep transformation of energy, transport, agriculture etc., just to name a few. All these changes will affect every sector of Europe's economy (and beyond) and as a result, a lot of push-back is expected and will require tough and bold political decisions to be made.

It is also important to highlight that young protestors see tackling climate change as a matter of global justice too – as a call to address Global North-South inequalities but also inter and intra country injustices within our societies. This is why #ClimateJusticeNow global phenomena on social media has also been translated as the central message of the massive street protests taking place worldwide.

However, strong messages like this one cannot bring about a real impact if the language and narrative does not resonate with a wider audience. It has been proven by political history that labels and language have a crucial impact on perceptions and actions. That is why, we as Youth have also made sure to redefine the language we are recurring to when we talking about climate. Today, it is a matter of climate actions, crises and emergencies, words that underline the dramatic position we find ourselves in and the type of solutions we call for: **A new Social and Ecological Global Contract**. Some call it Green (New) Deal whilst others just defend the fact that the basis of such contract can be found in the Paris Agreements which would need for the signatories to comply in a binding legislation, a direction that countries like France, China and Russia have undertaken (contrary to the United States that officially redraw its commitment) but critics argue that even that would not be enough to counter the already existing consequences<sup>2</sup>.

The concept of climate justice is politically significant for us as social-democrats. In fact, social fairness is one of our core values since our beginning. It has been a key campaign message of the May 2019 European elections campaign and across the Atlantic in view of upcoming elections in the United States.

For politics of today these global manifestations by Millennials and Gen Z should create pause and attentiveness. Why? Because in every major societal change we have witnessed that justice is one of the key factors and propeller for change and if social justice is not taken into the consideration, as it can also lead to some serious backlash.

Our generation is calling out in the streets for effective change as we want a healthy, prosperous and sustainable future. Let us learn from past mistakes and make sure that this call is answered with fairness and without leaving anyone behind. Change is not an option it is a requirement – bringing about climate justice for All and by All; the time to act is now #ClimateJusticeNow!

Suggested reading:

[FEPS – SPERI Study: Intergenerational fairness in post-crisis Europe: A comparative study](#)

[FEPS UNited for Climate Justice Steering Committee: Executive Summary UNited for Climate Justice](#)

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<sup>2</sup> IPCC, Special Report: Global Warming of 1,5°C, <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/spm/>