

Escaping humanitarian catastrophes – on the social dimension of climate change

The course of Climate Change threatens human rights

Climate Change does not only have physical consequences like rising sea levels which lead to flooding of coastal regions and render islands uninhabitable. Between 2002 and 2011 about 300 Million people are hit by natural disasters – most of the catastrophes went unnoticed by the global public. In the long run even more than 300 Million might be forced to leave their homes and migrate into an uncertain future. This means nothing less than a veritable threat to human rights caused by Climate Change and the misguided attempts to cope with this challenge by introducing false solutions like carbon-trade or climate-certificates. In particular the rights to a secure life, to alimentation, access to water and health services as well as the fundamental right self-determination are violated. Even worse, Climate Change and the accompanying human rights infringements mostly affect highly vulnerable groups like the poor, indigenous people, women and children. To the contrary the highly industrialised Nations in the global North which contribute the most to the notorious CO₂-emissions do not suffer much from the consequences of Global Warming although they are much better equipped with the essential resources (material and financial) to cope with the challenges of adoption and lifestyle changes.

Climate Change causes displacement and transcontinental migration

Migration is always the result of push and pull factors. The most prominent causes are related to unbearable poverty, violent conflicts, lack of chances to improve living conditions and social exclusion. Climate Change contributes essentially to worsen all these factors by adding to the curse of everyday scourges natural disasters like heavy storms, floods and droughts. The destruction of basic living conditions – particularly the pollution of soil and water – leads to decreasing harvests and the rising sea level causes a permanent loss of fertile arable land which affects hundreds of millions of humans. Food sovereignty is undermined where ever the preservation of functioning eco-systems is the indispensable precondition of livelihoods – be it fishery or agriculture. The shrinking availability of water and land often creates growing tensions between people. Eventually these causes lead to forced displacement, flight and migration, first inside nation-states and in the end to transcontinental currents of refugees. However, the industrialised nations because of their role as originators of Climate Change have to bear responsibility for all these mal-developments.

In August 2014 this has first been acknowledged by the government of New Zealand which accepted Climate Change effects as a reasonable cause for asylum. Therefore Friends of the Earth emphasised on the occasion of an UN-Conference in September 2014 that 'Climate refugees should enjoy the right to asylum and should be recognised by the UNHCR'.

Climate Justice – a policy challenge

The plight of the people in the Global South is inseparable from the policies implemented in the industrialised and the emerging economies. What is urgently needed is a debate about legal and human rights protection for people who are forced to escape the consequences of Climate Change. So far there is no such protection because of a lack of agreed definition of Climate Change and a list of internationally acknowledged implications of the on-going process of environmental and social destruction. Thus there is no generally accepted status of 'Climate Refugees'. But the debate is gaining momentum whether or to which extent the main causers of Climate Change could be made

legally responsible for the consequences of their behaviour. The industrialised nations – including Germany – need to take global responsibility for their style of producing and living which leads to Climate Change.

In September 2015 the World Climate Conference will take important decisions. These will include the understanding of Climate Change as a problem which is far wider than its ecological implications – it's a social challenge as well. Thus Climate Policy requires also new concepts of global justice and international solidarity, in particular in the early-industrialised nations. The political party DIE LINKE made a first attempt in this direction by drafting a strategic paper entitled "Plan B – a guideline for the necessary socio-ecological change".

This conference aims to discuss jointly with experts and activists from the global South and North a number of thrilling questions related to the Climate Change and Human Rights perspective – such as the legal status of climate refugees, compensation for Climate Change related damages and an overall turn-around of political approaches in the aftermath of the up-coming Paris Conference in September.

Programme

Day one – Climate Change a social Challenge

15:00 **Opening addresses**
Inge Höger (MP) and
Dagmar Enkelmann (Chairperson of the executive board Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung)

15:15 – 15:45 **Climate Change and Climate Justice**
Keynote speeches by Dietmar Bartsch (MP) and Annette Groth (MP)

15:45 – 17:15 Panel **Climate Change in Politics**
Eva Bulling-Schröter (MP)
Michael Müller (Naturfreunde, Germany)
Joan Carling (Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact; Thailand)

Facilitator: Tadzio Müller (Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung)

Coffee break

17:45 – 19:15 Panel **Climate Change and Human Rights Violations**
Sabine Minninger (Brot für die Welt)
Kai Niebert (University of Zurich, Switzerland)
Nnimmo Bassey (Health of the Earth Foundation, Nigeria)

Facilitator: Inge Höger (MP)

19:15 – 19:30 Vernissage **Climate and Displacement – Endangered Livelihoods**

19:30 – 22:00 Film screening and discussion **Climate Change and the global South**

Nnimmo Bassey (Health of the Earth Foundation, Nigeria)
Joan Carling (Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact; Thailand)
Mussa Billegeya (Rosa Luxemburg Foundation; Tanzania)

Facilitator: Arndt Hopfmann (Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung)

Day Two – Climate Change and Migration

09:30 – 10:15 **Escaping Climate Change**

Keynote speech by Angela Oels (University of Lund, Sweden)

10:15 – 12:15 **Workshops**

1) Climate Change and international Migration

Mamadou Mbodji (Association Sénégalais des Amis de la Nature; Sénégal)

Cosmin Corendea (United Nation University)

Facilitator: Annette Groth (MP)

2) Transcontinental Migration – Policy Challenges to the European Union and Germany

Ulla Jelpke (MP)

Doris Peschke (Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, Brussels, Belgium)

Facilitator: Koray Yilmaz-Günay (Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung)

3) Migration, Conflicts, Wars and Military Containment

Christoph Marischka (Information Centre on Militarisation)

Mussa Billegeya (Rosa Luxemburg Foundation; Tanzania)

Facilitator: Inge Höger (MP)

4) Insurance against the effects of climate change – protection for the poorest or profit for insurance companies?

Heike Hänsel (MP)

Nikolas Scherer (Hertie School of Governance)

Simone Ruiz-Vergote (Allianz Climate Solutions)

Facilitator: Alexander King (parliamentarian group „DIE LINKE“)

12:15 – 13:00 **Lunch break**

13:00 – 13:45 Presentations of Results from the Workshops

Facilitation: Ulla Jelpke (MP) and Inge Höger (MP)

13:45 – 15:15 Panel **Climate Justice – making the polluters accountable**

Simone Ruiz-Vergote (Allianz Climate Solutions)

Jan Kowalzig (Oxfam, Germany)

Joan Carling (Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, Thailand)

Facilitator: Christiane Averbeck (Climate Alliance Germany)

15:15 – 16:15 Closing Panel **On the Way to Climate Justice in Solidarity**

Doris Peschke (Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, Brussels, Belgium)

Sabine Leidig (MP)

Nnimmo Bassey (Health of Mother Earth Foundation)

Facilitator: Annette Groth (MP)

16:15 – 16:30 **Closing remarks**

Sabine Leidig (MP)