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Ms Lidija Kegljevič Zagorc  
 State Secretary for Environment and Spatial Planning  
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22 May, 2024

**Subject: Liege Declaration – A roadmap for collective action to tackle the challenges of climate change in the European Union**

*Dear Ms Kegljevič Zagorc,*

The Climate Chance Europe 2024 Wallonia Summit, organised in February 2024 by Wallonia and the Climate Chance Association as part of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, was a resounding success. It brought together 1,000 participants, of over 20 nationalities, representing the diversity of non-state actors from across the continent.

The Summit concluded with the 'Liege Declaration', **a roadmap for adaptation to climate change in Europe, a first of its kind**. It is the most representative document ever produced highlighting the priorities and concerns of local and regional actors concerning adaptation. The Declaration is signed by nearly 100 European non-state organisations and networks, including cities, regions, NGOs, businesses, universities, think tanks, and more.

The key points of this roadmap summed up, include:

- The best adaptation policy is one that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, nevertheless, there is an urgent need to make adaptation an equal priority.
- Nature-based solutions can play an important role in adaptation to climate change;
- Social justice must be at the heart of adaptation in Europe to ensure a just transition in the face of climate change. This includes actively involving citizens, women, communities and young people in adaptation strategies.
- It is necessary to integrate a culture of prevention and resilience at all levels of governance and to mobilise the necessary resources to support adaptation actions.
- Strengthening cooperation and coordination between non-state actors, local and national governments, and European institutions is key to maximising the effectiveness and impact of adaptation measures in Europe.



In short, the Liege Declaration calls for the adoption of a common adaptation roadmap at the EU level.

In June 2024, the Environment Council taking place under the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union Intends to adopt important conclusions on the future of European environmental policies. These conclusions are expected to include a section on the three main priorities of the Belgian Presidency: Just Transition, Circular Economy, and Adaptation and Resilience

As part of the third priority, the Liege Declaration acts as a major contribution to the reflections of the EU's Environment Council on a renewed and strengthened European Green Deal after 2024. It is for this reason that we are sending you this summary of the key takeaways from the Summit and the Liege Declaration.

We hope that these proposals, the call for collective and coordinated action to tackle the challenges posed by climate change, and the call to protect Europe's people, ecosystems and economy will feed into and enrich your own commitments and future discussions.

Please do not hesitate to contact us via the Director of the Climate Chance Association if you would like any further information: <[romain.crouzet@climate-chance.org](mailto:romain.crouzet@climate-chance.org)>; +33 6.62.73.72.39.

Kind regards,

Philippe Henry  
Céline Tellier  
Ronan Dantec



## The Climate Chance Europe 2024 Wallonia Summit

The **Climate Chance Europe 2024 Wallonia Summit** "Adaptation to Climate Change, Nature-based Solutions and Resilience" was held at the Palais des Congrès in Liege on February 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Organised by the Walloon Ministers for Climate and the Environment, Philippe Henry and Céline Tellier, and the Climate Chance Association, the Summit was a remarkable success. It was also **the first international event dedicated to adaptation to climate change.**

Over the course of two days, the Summit brought together around **1,000 participants from over 20 nationalities**, as well as a number of non-state actors from European networks and organisations. These included businesses, researchers, civil society members and local governments. The Summit offered over 50 sessions featuring 130 speakers, experts and practitioners: 2 high-level plenary conferences, 18 interactive workshops, a Pitch Corner, and networking sessions. The event was widely covered by national and international media outlets with over **75 reports featured in the press, TV and the radio** such as on RTBF, RTC, Le Soir, La Libre, RTL, TV5 Monde, Euractiv...



As part of the European Green Deal, the organisers of the Summit sought to contribute to the work being carried out by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, to strengthen the European Green Deal. At the end of the Summit, participants called **for collective and coordinated action to confront the challenges posed by climate change, and to protect Europe's people, ecosystems, and economy.**

The collaborative efforts of the participants and organisers led to the conclusion of the Summit on Friday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024 with the adoption of **the Liege Declaration on Adaptation to Climate Change, a roadmap for non-state actors to adapt to climate change in Europe.**



The Liege Declaration has already **been signed by almost 100 organisations and networks**, including EUROCITIES, a network of major European cities with over 200 members; CEMR, the largest association of local authorities in Europe with over 1 million European elected representatives as members; Climate Alliance, the largest network of European cities dedicated to climate action (2,000 municipalities); ICLEI Europe (over 2,500 local and regional authorities); CAN Europe (representing over 1,700 NGOs); UVCW, representing all the municipalities in Wallonia; CANOPEA (the federation of environmental associations in Wallonia), and more.

Wallonia and the Climate Chance Association, particularly over the course of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU until June 30<sup>th</sup>, will actively be working to amplify the advocacy on the messages and concrete recommendations presented in the roadmap for climate change adaptation by non-state actors.

The year of 2024 will see a number of events and conferences focusing on climate change and adaptation, **providing opportunities to continue the advocacy work which began in Liege**. The 1<sup>st</sup> Buildings and Climate Global Forum (Paris) and the 10<sup>th</sup> European Summit of Regions and Cities held in March provided an opportunity to place the Liege Declaration at the heart of discussions. Other upcoming events include the European Energy Transition Conference (Dunkirk), the EU Green Week and the COP29 (Baku).

## Summary of the Climate Chance Europe 2024 Wallonia Summit

### Emerging Themes and Takeaways from the Summit

This document summarises the key themes that emerged from the debates, discussions and project pitches at the Summit, as well as the points included in the Liège Declaration, organised as **ten axes of action**. It presents the major **challenges** faced in advancing climate adaptation in Europe, as felt by the actors who took part in the Summit, and the **policy recommendations** that arose from our collective reflections. It also highlights examples of **best practices** that are already being implemented and can be replicated and scaled-up across the continent.

#### 1. Placing mitigation and adaptation policies on a par

##### The challenge

The best adaptation policy is a greenhouse gas emission reduction policy. This fact was highlighted by various speakers at the plenaries and workshops, referring to the hard limits on adaptation, i.e., the limits of physical changes beyond which even adaptation is impossible. There is a need for continued mitigation efforts, in order to stay within the realm of possible adaptation. The adoption of policies that create synergies between adaptation and mitigation can make both more effective.

At the same time, there was also a general consensus on the unequivocal and urgent need for adaptation. Europe has been warming faster than the rest of the world and experiencing more intense and frequent climate events, exacerbating gender inequalities and putting a special toll on socially discriminated populations. The year 2023 saw several temperature records shattered. Local experiences from the 2021 floods in Wallonia also contributed to building the narrative for strengthening resilience. Large scale and widespread efforts are needed to bring adaptation to par with mitigation, and to mainstream socially and gender just adaptation actions into all levels and sectors of policy.

##### Recommendations

- Ensuring **equal importance** to mitigation and adaptation priorities across all levels of climate policy, as called for in the Paris Agreement, the EU Climate Law, the Governance Regulation of the Energy Union and Climate Action, and other national laws.
- Adopting a more coherent and coordinated approach that takes into account the **synergies and trade-offs** between mitigation and adaptation policies and focuses on no-regret measures that integrate both aspects.
- Implementing the **EU Green Deal** to build a socially just, resilient Europe, mitigate climate change, halt biodiversity loss and limit resource use, including water; and ensuring the translation of Green Deal objectives into achievable targets across all levels of governance – with a particular focus on regional and local levels.
- Increasing **European ambition on adaptation**, going beyond the 2021 Adaptation Strategy and addressing the risks that are identified by the European Climate Risk Assessment being prepared by the European Environmental Agency.

##### Best practice example

- The Covenant of Mayors approach that focuses on three pillars of mitigation, adaptation and energy poverty, encouraging signatory cities to develop integrated Sustainable Energy and



Climate Action Plans; starting with Baseline Emissions Inventories and Risk and Vulnerability Assessments, and proceeding to policies targeting low-carbon and climate-resilient cities.

## 2. Basing policies, actions and investments on scientific and holistic analyses of climate risks and hazards

### The challenge

The exchanges at the Summit reiterated the interconnectedness of the ongoing planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and the need to approach environmental risks with a holistic perspective. The periodical reports of the [IPCC](#), the [IPBES](#), and other international bodies provide the most definitive state of the environment, and even future scenarios. The nine planetary boundaries framework, [elaborated](#) in 2009 and [quantified](#) most recently in 2023, provide an idea of the “safe operating space” for humanity. Six of the nine boundaries have already been crossed. In a context where climate change is outpacing policy responses, the latest available scientific information must feed into policy reflections. Aside from the physical risks, there are also the socio-economic inequalities that stem from our economic model, which further intensify the impacts of extreme climatic events on our society. All of these together create a system of related and cascading risks, which can also vary across countries, within countries and even regions and cities. Assessing these risks is the beginning of the adaptation policy cycle, and must be considered at each level before in order to take effective action. These risks also need to be integrated into decisions charting future actions and investments, to ensure climate resilient societies and infrastructures.

### Recommendations

- Having a **holistic and interconnected approach** while designing the adaptation policies, taking into account the available resources and the nine planetary boundaries and using the principles of Observe - Understand - Decide.
- Considering the cascading effects of climate risks and hazards by creating in-depth **risk analyses** and using **data-driven support tools** to design adaptation policies in all sectors, as part of a “predictive maintenance” approach.
- Aligning all future policies, actions and investment decisions with **trajectories based on the latest science**, drawing knowledge from specialised bodies like the IPCC, the IPBES, and the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change.
- Integrating adaptation and circular economy concerns into **public procurement**, which can act as a powerful lever for market change.

### Best practice examples

- [Trajectoires d'Adaptation au Changement Climatique des Territoires \(TACCT\)](#) is a method designed by the Ademe in France to help local authorities develop their adaptation policy from A to Z, from diagnosing the main impacts of climate change on their territory, to monitoring the measures taken and evaluating their strategy and action plan
- [Grenoble 2040](#): Using the scientific Donut Framework, developed by Kate Raworth, to visualise where Grenoble stands in terms of planetary boundaries and the satisfaction of basic human needs.
- [CO2 Performance Ladder](#): This tool, developed by the SKAO foundation, helps public procurers select companies that are aligned with greener and fairer transition and resilience goals.

### 3. Promoting the vertical integration of subnational levels in adaptation planning and policies

#### The challenge

Vertical integration for adaptation is the process of creating intentional and strategic linkages between local, subnational, national, transboundary and international levels, across phases of planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. The two days of discussion stressed the importance of the local and regional levels of governance due to the place-based nature of adaptation, while also drawing attention to the need for better coordination between the various levels. Today, only 14% of CEMR members are currently included in the drafting of national energy and climate plans. At the European level, the EU and National frameworks for adaptation planning are well-defined under the European Climate Law and the Governance Regulation of the Energy Union. Subnational action remains largely voluntary – showing a strong bottom-up dynamic, but also underlining the need for local capacity building, which is currently taking place through initiatives like the EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change or the Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy, but needs to be scaled up. Speakers also highlighted the limits of voluntary action, beyond which efforts need to be made to integrate local governments.

#### Recommendations

- Making **top-down approaches** (which impose legal obligations on lower levels) and **bottom-up approaches** (driven by the voluntary and proactive participation of local authorities) meet in the middle, to develop a framework that ensures adequate support and freedom for local levels.
- **Involving local governments** and their needs and knowledge in operational adaptation plans, as they have a better understanding of the gaps that need to be filled at their level; including local governments, from the drafting phase and all along the policy cycle, in National Energy and Climate Plans.
- Improving **access to finance and capacity building** for the implementation of adaptation plans for local and regional governments, and making key resources (ex. EEA reports, support tools, etc.) available in local languages and tailored to local contexts.
- **Strengthening local frameworks** for the collection and use of climate and socio-economic **data**, at the beginning of the policy cycle to feed into risk assessments, and at the monitoring and evaluation phases to better inform the next cycle.

#### Best practice examples

- Multi-level collaboration space in València, Spain: This framework is being designed to promote coordination between the city and regional government, as well as with other stakeholders, within the context of the EU Mission on Adaptation.
- The Climate Action Regional Offices in Ireland form elements of multilevel governance that coordinate this governance while supporting municipalities in their work, and also act as knowledge hubs.
- National knowledge hubs for adaptation-related information (ex. France, Greece), as well as regional climate hubs (ex. Wallonia, Flanders in Belgium) that allow subnational policy actors access to a one-stop-stop for adaptation-related information.

#### 4. Promoting the horizontal integration of sectoral adaptation policies and coordination across types of actors

##### The challenge

Climate change affects all sectors of the economy and adapting to its impacts requires coordinated action across these sectors: energy, transport, buildings, water, food and agriculture, tourism, and more. Horizontal integration across different sectors of activity, and mainstreaming of adaptation into sectoral policies is advancing, but needs to be scaled up. Action in any one sector must not be in isolation from those being taken in other sectors. Several sessions during the summit called for the breaking of silos and working together across sectors and departments at various levels of governance, but also across groups of actors (local governments, civil society, businesses, etc). Private sector involvement, both in adapting their own operations and in implementation of wider adaptation measures, is crucial.

##### Recommendations

- Calling for a new legal framework, such as an **EU Climate Adaptation Law**, which would ensure the mainstreaming of adaptation across sectoral policies.
- Implementing an **EU Blue Deal**, as a complement to the EU Green Deal; adopting a European Water and Climate Resilience Law, to have legally binding measures and better implementation of existing policies, to integrate the protection of wetlands in order to achieve European environmental goals.
- Including **energy system concerns** into larger reflections on resilience, including renewable storage, and the upgrade and protection of energy infrastructure against extreme climate events, to ensure uninterrupted energy supply.
- Implementing the European Commission's "**no net land take by 2050**" commitment and supporting all the actors in their submission of renovation plans that ensure a real decoupling between the use of natural resources and their direct and indirect CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.
- Harmonising the new European Reporting Standards established through directives and regulations like the **CSRD**, **SFDR**, and potentially the **CSDDD**, to ensure transparency, accountability and comparability of **private sector climate action**, as well their socio-economic impacts.

##### Best practice examples

- The **Climate and Environment Risk Assessment Center (CERAC)** in Belgium is linked to security policies, not siloed into "environmental policies". It helps mainstream adaptation in all policies and also, for the first time, includes biodiversity risks.
- Projects like **MOVING** (Mountain Valorisation through Interconnectedness and Green Growth) show the horizontal integration of adaptation across sectors and actors at the scale of a mountain economy.
- The city of Frankfurt takes an integrated approach to **adaptation** and mitigation. Different municipal departments are working together, taking into account all the different aspects of the city (species, water, social, mobility, etc.).
- Wider usage of the **ACT Adaptation methodology** to evaluate private sector adaptation strategies, in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement.



## 5. Taking into account the concentrated vulnerability of cities in urban planning

### The challenge

Cities concentrate sizable populations, built environment, infrastructure and other resources, and urbanisation generates higher vulnerability and exposure, leading to more intense risks and impacts. Urban adaptation was of particular concern at the Summit, provoking reflections on the patterns of urban development that accentuate climate risks from phenomena like urban heat islands, sea level rise or floods, and on the distribution of these risks among the population of a city.

The links and dependencies between urban and rural territories in this context cannot be ignored. The various discussions brought out the need to reevaluate the physical and social spaces that cities take up, and re-imagine how they are organised, making more space for nature (greenery, water...), shorter local circuits and livelier neighbourhoods.

### Recommendations

- Facilitating an **integrated approach** to urban mitigation and adaptation policies that facilitate implementation, optimising the use of locally available resources.
- Promoting urban adaptation policies across different municipal secretariats and departments at the city level; Integrating **sectoral urban plans**, particularly urban mobility plans, with climate plans to avoid some measures outweighing others and the duplications of efforts.
- **Diversifying models** of urban planning, drawing from as much from the latest technological advances as from indigenous knowledge, while operationalising solutions with citizen participation.
- Further encouraging **cooperation between cities** at strategic, political and practical levels, especially between large, medium and small cities, to pool knowledge and experiences.

### Best practice examples

- Sponge cities that soak in rainwater, retain excess stormwater, and filter and release the water slowly, reducing the risk of flooding. They make use of NbS like wetlands, greenways, parks, rain gardens, green roofs, and bioswales. The City of Eupen, and projects like Rewet are piloting these solutions.
- SlowHeat develops knowledge and builds resilience by exploring and co-constructing the idea and practice of low temperature living, low-energy in buildings.
- Rives Ardentes is an initiative in Liège to transform a former industrial site into a model eco-district for sustainability and urban innovation. The project focuses on creating a living space that integrates advanced ecological solutions while fostering a dynamic and inclusive community.
- The Laboratório da Paisagem, co-founded by the Guimarães City Council, brings together researchers and citizens to better understand landscape dynamics and the economic fabric of the territory, and provide inputs for local land management and planning processes.

## 6. Promoting and nurturing citizen-, youth- and community-led action

### The challenge

While emphasising the importance of bottom-up approaches to adaptation, the role of citizens and communities, acting as stewards of their own habitats was also brought to the forefront. This involves

giving agency to citizens, including young people who will form the frontlines of the battle against climate change in the future, and to communities, to ensure their participation in the choice, development and implementation of adaptation actions. Community-led initiatives also need to be embedded in the larger systemic framework and ultimately lead to collective social change – a process that is currently hindered by a lack of adequate support and funding programmes at EU, national, regional and local levels.

At the same time, a mobilisation of citizens is also necessary to ensure wider awareness on issues of adaptation, and the ownership of climate adaptation, which is crucial for the successful implementation of planned actions.

### Recommendations

- **Delegating decision-making** on adaptation policies to the most appropriate level, including the involvement of citizens, young people and local communities by creating forums of exchange, supporting all citizen participation; giving agency to citizens through initiatives like participative, municipal climate budgets.
- Diversifying existing **tools for citizen participation**, and adapting them over the course of the policy planning and implementation cycle integrating takeaways from experiences.
- Establishing **appropriate funding mechanisms** for climate action initiatives led by citizens, young people and local communities; and ensuring fair and equal access to such mechanisms.

### Best practice examples

- The Time for Collective Action Manifesto, the outcome of a year-long and ongoing consultation process initiated by ECOLISE, positions community-led initiatives towards the European Green Deal, contributing to ten theses towards transformative community-led local development policies. These theses provide a framework for conversations about the role of communities in achieving transformative systemic change and their connection with EU policies.
- Wider use of tools like the Stakeholder and Citizen Engagement Manual by regions and municipalities participating in the EU Mission Adaptation to Climate Change or signatories to the Covenant of Mayors, in conjunction with tools like the Regional or Urban Adaptation Support Tools (RAST, UAST for Covenant cities).
- Food Belt projects in Wallonia, initiated by citizens and then supported by local authorities. Projects include, among others, “Good Food” or “Manger Demain”.
- Social vegetable gardening in Utrecht helped increase the unity among residents in the neighbourhoods with such gardens, while also increasing the commitment from residents to local sustainability.

## 7. Developing adaptation policy as a vehicle for social justice, and integrating gender concerns

### The challenge

The Liège Déclaration in its preamble acknowledges that precarious populations, especially women and people facing multiple discriminations stand to be more intensely affected by climate change, and have less influence on adaptation planning. They are also more affected by adaptation policies, being more likely to bear the costs of adaptation and at higher risk of displacement. The exchanges at the Summit also pointed out the difficulties related to taking into account care work or the informal

economy into adaptation strategies, and the need to integrate social justice considerations into adaptation policies.

Current EU climate policy instruments show limited recognition and a narrow comprehension of the negative impacts they could generate, particularly in terms of inequality. The double linkage between adaptation and social policies must be considered: the socio-economic impacts of adaptation policies for the most vulnerable groups, as well as the potential of adaptation actions to deliver socio-economic benefits to these groups.

### Recommendations

- Integrating a **gender-responsive approach** in the planning and implementation of adaptation policies, considering gender-related outcomes and impacts in the monitoring and evaluation of policies.
- Better integrating, in a more consistent manner, **socio-economic impact assessments** throughout the adaptation policy cycle, across all levels of governance; integrating social criteria in the disbursement of funds for climate adaptation projects.
- Mainstreaming **adaptation concerns in social policy**, by aligning social policy objectives, targets and funding flows with climate trajectories.
- Moving beyond the system of individual subsidies and incentives in favour of **collective projects**, to ensure a more equal distribution of benefits from climate policy.
- Investing more in **climate-resilient social housing**, as it is in this sector that social justice and housing adaptation can be combined; developing adaptation strategies in the building sector that take into account differences in living conditions and that specifically target neighbourhoods where these vulnerable populations live, who are much more exposed to climate risks.

### Best practice examples

- The COGITO project develops and analyses just net zero transition scenarios in Brussels, creating pathways to achieve environmental (adaptation) goals and respond to social justice in housing, mobility, green spaces...
- The Shared Green Deal's core goal is to stimulate shared actions on Green Deal initiatives across Europe, by providing Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) tools to support the implementation of 8 EU Green Deal policy areas, at the local and regional level.
- The Housing-Energy Pact under the Climate Coalition in Belgium is a set of key actions designed to dramatically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions across the industry and realise the right to quality, affordable housing for all.

## 8. Financing adaptation through innovative tools and approaches

### The challenge

The cost of inaction in the face of climate change is acknowledged to be much greater in the long run than the cost of action, for all stakeholders. Yet, globally, adaptation accounts for a small percentage of total climate finance, and has even been declining according to certain estimates. In Europe too, one of the main barriers to adaptation identified by the IPCC was the insufficient mobilisation of finance. The number of adaptation projects being funded by the four main international climate funds have decreased in number, while increasing in value due to the presence of larger projects.

At the EU level, the 2021-27 Multiannual Financial Framework ensures that at least 25% of the European budget is climate-related expenditure, and tracking mechanisms ensure that the objectives

are met. However, Member States reported more difficulties in tracking adaptation spending, and that most of the funds for adaptation came from the EU level. Current cost assessments are limited to federal or sectoral levels, while adaptation planning documents rarely mention dedicated budgets or financing streams. Thus besides the need to mobilise more funding for adaptation overall, there is also the need to better track current flows of funding, and, as observed by participants at the Summit, find ways to make this funding more accessible to local actors to implement their adaptation plans.

### Recommendations

- **Mainstreaming adaptation and risk preparedness** when deciding on and implementing EU funds across all sectors, including the need to address as a priority existing EU policies and financial mechanisms that may exacerbate vulnerabilities to climate risks.
- Conducting thorough **cost assessments** of adaptation actions at all levels of governance, especially local, and including medium- and longer-term socio-economic impacts of policies in cost-benefit analyses; including the **cost of inaction** into policy considerations, both at a private and public level.
- Harmonising relatively fragmented European public policies to ensure adequate financing for adaptation, with a focus on maintaining **affordability** of policy interventions and maximising **cost-effectiveness in the long term**.
- Developing a more uniform **definition and tracking** of adaptation finance flows through instruments like the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the LIFE Programme, Horizon Europe, the EU Cohesion Facility, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Just Transition Fund and others.
- Exploring and **operationalising new sources** of financing for adaptation, such as channelling EU-ETS revenues to fund local adaptation plans; increasing awareness of local level decision-makers on available sources of funding.

### Best practice examples

- Applying methodologies like Activity-based costing to adaptation projects at the European level. This method is directly linked to the intervention design and expected outcomes. It is relatively accurate; if the costs of items are known, there will be little variation in implementation.
- The REGILIENCE project developed a funding repository to raise awareness of available financial resources on European and national level dedicated to supporting regional climate resilience and adaptation.

## 9. Creating newer models of insuring against climate change

### The challenge

The insurance sector plays an often-overlooked yet important role in reducing the risk exposure of individuals or households, businesses, and governments to climate change, by protecting them against financial losses. Insurance affects the everyday decisions related to infrastructure, planning, land-use, and more. However, increasingly frequent and intense climatic events threaten to disrupt the insurance market, in addition to longer-term uncertainty brought by slow-onset climatic events. Currently in Europe, only a quarter of the total economic losses caused by climate events are insured, resulting in a protection gap (the difference between insured and uninsured losses) that needs to be closed. There is also a need to ensure that insurance remains affordable, and to reimagine the contracts between policyholders, insurers and governments, to make the insurance sector a lever for

transformative adaptation, while also making use of the latest technological advances (AI, projection models, risk management models...).

### Recommendations

- Strengthening **partnerships between the insurance sector and public authorities**, both in terms of prevention and intervention (including in the event of natural disasters) and as part of a just transition.
- Introducing tax incentives for individuals and organisations to take **preventive action**, in order to ensure an adapted and just insurance system in Europe.
- Better combining existing **geolocalized climate data and modelling** to chart out risks in different areas, to be able to take preventative action, pool insurability data, and to adjust the offer of insurance while maintaining affordability.
- Strengthening public-private collaboration and a common understanding of priorities, and making available to insurers the **risk prevention and nature restoration projects** set up by local authorities to adjust insurance premiums for contracts in these communities.
- Introducing **parametric insurance**, which moves from insuring against the magnitude of losses (as in traditional policies) to insuring against the occurrence of specific events (storms, earthquakes, etc.) based on the magnitude of the event, and simplifying administrative steps for receiving indemnities.
- Removing, as much as possible, **legal and regulatory barriers** in the insurance sector in Europe with a view of making compensation payments more fluid, without compromising on social or environmental safeguards, depending on the involved parameters.
- Incorporating **longer-term climate risk assessments** in the larger supervisory and regulatory framework that applies to insurers and reinsurers.

### Best practice example

- The Climate Resilience Dialogue aims to narrow the climate protection gap and to find ways to stimulate investment in good adaptation. It brings together insurers, reinsurers, risk managers, public authorities and regions, and representatives of consumers.

## 10. Working with nature: Nature-based Solutions and Ecosystem-based Adaptation

### The challenge

Reiterated in nearly all the sessions at the Summit was the fact that nature is an ally and has to be treated as such, working with it rather than against it. The IPBES and the IPCC stress the role of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in addressing the interconnected planetary crises. The European Commission, in its definition of NbS also acknowledges the benefits of such an approach: they are *cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience; and bring more, and more diverse, nature and natural features and processes into cities, landscapes and seascapes, through locally adapted, resource-efficient and systemic interventions*. The EU Adaptation Strategy also mentions Ecosystem-based Approaches (EbA), which focuses on the restoration of natural ecosystems and ecosystem services in order to adapt to climate change. The Liège Declaration and the Summit saw unanimous agreement on the wider adoption of NbS and EbA in adaptation actions.

### Recommendations

- Supporting research into a **multi-dimensional approach** to nature-based solutions to better address multiple issues at a time, and tackle adaptation needs across different sectors.
- Encouraging the restoration of biodiversity in greening cities, by prioritising the better use and management of **already available resources** including local topographies, hydrological systems and flora and fauna.
- Integrating **Indigenous People's knowledge and rights** into the design of adaptation policies.
- Ensuring the coherence between the EU's Climate Adaptation, Biodiversity, and Forest strategies, to **mutualise co-benefits** across policies that are part of the Green Deal package.
- Increasing the **level of funding for restoration** under the [EU Nature restoration law](#), which sets a target for the EU to restore at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030 and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050; making use of provisions under the Law to restore forests, prioritising natural regeneration.

### Best practice examples

- Launched by France at COP21 in 2015, the [4 for 1000](#) initiative brings together voluntary stakeholders from the public and private sectors to take concrete action on carbon storage in soils, and to commit the world's farmers to productive, resilient agriculture.
- [Yes, We Plant](#) is one of the Walloon government's flagship projects: planting 4,000 km of hedges and 1 million trees in Wallonia.
- The rehabilitation of the [Jamiolle HV substation](#) as part of [Elia's ActNow sustainability programme](#) aims to return the land to its original agricultural use while promoting biodiversity. Invasive plants are being removed, a pond is being created and open hedges and an orchard with 77 trees are being planted.
- [Resilient Rivers and Forests](#) are part of the initiatives of the [Semois Valley National Park](#). These initiatives include several nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based adaptation actions. They are based on consultation processes and prioritisation, taking into account socio-economic, landscape and heritage aspects.



## Liege Declaration on Adaptation to Climate Change

### Roadmap on adaptation to climate change in Europe of non-state actors gathers at the Climate Chance Europe Wallonia Summit

#### Under the auspices of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU

We, European networks and organisations of non-state actors – including businesses, researchers, civil society, local governments –, gathered in Liège to discuss the future of the European Green Deal post-2024, in particular regarding adaptation to climate change, nature-based solutions (NbS) and resilience,

**Recognising** the increasing impact of our economic model, our consumption and resource management patterns and other anthropogenic factors on biodiversity and climate, the growing frequency and intensity of hazardous climate extremes, and the detrimental impacts they have on our societies, with exacerbated inequalities, the economy and ecosystem and recognising therefore the urgency of adapting to climate change;

**Noticing** the importance of building resilience of citizens and communities in the potential event of failure of socio-economic systems, particularly in respect to being able to source and maintain the essentials to sustain life (food, energy, medicine) and upholding a democratic framework that enshrines fundamental human rights;

**Stressing** that the unprecedented triple planetary environmental crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution), but also social, economic, and geopolitical crises are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, requiring a holistic, rights-based and intersectional approach that addresses these existential threats collectively;

**Reaffirming** that the best adaptation policy is a greenhouse gas emissions reduction policy, that the European Union has a key role to play in terms of exemplarity and influence on the emissions of other big emitters worldwide, and the need to develop the policies and maintain the initial ambition of the Green Deal;

**Highlighting** the necessity to base adaptation strategies on the latest available science, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) scenarios of increasing global temperatures, the United Nations Environment Programme's Adaptation Gap reports, and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) reports on biodiversity loss, and taking into account the known commitments of States within the framework of the Paris Agreement;

**Noting** with concern that maladaptation, as defined by IPCC, and unmanaged cascading risks, may lead to dramatic and sometimes irreversible outcomes for ecosystems and our communities, and may create lock-ins of resources-intensive practices which are difficult to reverse and often exacerbate inequalities;

**Acknowledging**, that precarious populations, especially women and people facing multiple discriminations, often have less influence on adaptation planning and less benefits brought by the adaptations policies, and are particularly at risk of incurring damages and job losses;

**Underlining** that, for all stakeholders, especially young people and future generations, the cost of inaction is higher than the cost of action and that the social impacts of adaptation policies have to be taken into account, aiming at social progress and gender equality, following to the guidelines for a



just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all, as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO);

**Highlighting** the potential co-benefits of NbS and ecosystem-based approaches, when adopting a human rights-based approach and ensuring environmental and social safeguards, to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises while contributing to disaster risk reduction, food and water security, resilience and benefitting human health, well-being, and the economy;

**Stressing** the importance of multilevel and multi-stakeholder action, among citizens, communities, education sector, local governments, associations, trade unions and the private sector, in collaboration with national and European institutions and supranational authorities and organisations;

**Underlining** the importance of an insurance system which preserves equality among citizens and territories, which is an actor of solidarity and prevention, leaving no one without insurance protection and support the stakeholders in their risk integration policies;

**Stressing** the urgent need to tackle the global water crisis with a comprehensive EU water strategy, an EU Blue Deal, also integrated into the Green Deal, and embedded in all EU policies; underlining the need to foster the protection, conservation and restoration of water resources and aquatic and marine ecosystems, which also play a key role in delivering climate adaptation benefits and co-benefits, while ensuring social and environmental safeguards, as recognised in the Conclusion of the first Global Stocktake of the Paris Agreement;

Collectively agree to:

**Call on** all political levels as well as the non-state actors to make adaptation a key priority in policy-making, to integrate a culture of prevention and resilience at all levels of governance and to produce climate and environmental risk assessments to inform and strengthen future adaptation plans.

**Mobilize** local governments, the private sector including insurers and investors, trade unions, and civil society, by involving them in the conception of bottom-up, gender-responsive local and regional adaptation plans and policies.

**Commit ourselves to** a community-led and community-based local and regional approach to adaptation issues, considering the diverse and place-based nature of vulnerabilities. The resourcing, mobilisation and capacity building of community-led initiatives and local authorities, leading to meaningful participation in democratic processes is important for the success of adaptation policies.

Urge the decision-makers at all levels in the EU, noting their essential and leading role on climate issues, to:

**Accelerate** the implementation of policies on adaptation, resilience and NbS projects, integrating gendered vulnerabilities, paid and unpaid care work, gender-sensitive communication and training, and monitoring and reporting on gender-responsive actions up to the challenges we are facing and aligned with the scientific recommendations.

**Ask** the European Commission to update and increase the ambition of its policies beyond its 2021 Adaptation Strategy, addressing the vulnerabilities and policy needs identified in the first EU Climate Risk Assessment conducted by the European Environment Agency (EEA), and relating climate adaptation considerations to the broader regional resilience context. In particular:



- **To implement** the EU Green Deal to build a socially just, resilient Europe, mitigate climate change, halt biodiversity loss and limit resource use, including water and integrate the EU objectives on gender equality.
- **To set** intermediary targets and milestones to pave the way to the Strategy's 2050 resilience objective including indicators to track progress on the ground, following the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change.
- **To elaborate** concrete proposals to mainstream adaptation in all levels of governance and sectoral policies, in particular in the agriculture, industry, energy and transport sectors, showing that a greener and resilient economy will preserve and create jobs that reduce inequalities and create a safer, prosperous society fostering green and social entrepreneurship and innovation.
- **To dedicate** a sufficient share of EU funds and new EU resources to NbS, in connection with the strategies of biodiversity recovery, and to local adaptation and prevention projects, and ensure funds are made more easily accessible to community-led initiatives and local authorities when discussing the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028-2034.
- **To create** platforms of knowledge-sharing and capacity-building regarding funding and financing mechanisms, integrating guidelines on environmental and social safeguards, that are accessible and adapted to any public or private stakeholders that have the power to design and implement adaptation and NbS interventions.
- **To phase out** biodiversity- and climate-harming subsidies, and actively implement the Biodiversity 2030 and Farm to Fork strategies, integrating gender-responsive measures and a bottom-up approach.
- **To advance** the understanding of what it means and how to operationalize a just transition on climate adaptation policies and strategies to strengthen resilience.

**Commit and deliver** on the international climate discussion to set a “new collective goal on climate finance” considering the needs and priorities of developing countries, as well as to advance on the importance of reforming the multilateral financial architecture taking the opportunity that the discussions on the UN Summit of the Future provide.

**Promote** best practice policy design rules – Monitoring, Reporting and Verification – that considers adaptation, resilience, NbS, as well as preventing maladaptation as the necessary elements for success, efficiency, quality, and well-being, within the planetary boundaries.

**Emphasize** the importance of taking into consideration adaptation issues in the public procurement framework in the EU.

**Consider**, in a European society where most of the population lives in cities, the importance of urban and housing planning which take into account the accelerating need for adaptation to the triple planetary crisis, particularly in terms of health.

**Design** sustainable territorial development and adaptation policies based on the relevance of rural territories for biodiversity and NbS, which address the functional links between rural and urban territories and their natural environments.

**Favour** knowledge development, teaching and exchange iterative learning, based for example on the MRV mentioned above and relevant scientific research, on climate adaptation planning and action, to stimulate innovation and transnational collaboration, including all the territorial and governance levels and to effectively learn from action on the ground.



**Urge** the private sector and the financial sector to scale up investments, in adaptation following the holistic approach of this Declaration.

In conclusion, this declaration demonstrates our collective commitment to adapting to the challenges posed by climate change, without prejudice to our commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to restore the role and functionality of biodiversity. It is a call to action, rooted in the spirit of the European Green Deal, encouraging cooperation, resilience and shared responsibility for the well-being of our communities and the planet.



With the support of



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