



The «Association pour les Nations Unies », APNU,  
The «Vereniging voor de Verenigde Naties », VVN  
The “United Nations Regional Information Centre”, UNRIC  
The “Brussels Climate March” and  
Egmont, the Royal Institute for International Relations

Organized a conference on 21 October 2015 in Brussels, on  
**«The UN Conference on Climate Change (COP 21) in Paris in  
December 2015 – What is at stake?»**

**With Brice Lalonde and Philippe Lamberts**



1. Professor **Olivier De Schutter**, President of the APNU and member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, introduced the debate by expressing his hope that the 21st conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) will put us on a path towards reducing emissions in order to remain within the 2°C limit set in Copenhagen in December 2009 and reaffirmed in Cancun in 2011. He took note of certain promising developments, including new commitments from China and the US, and he underlined the multidimensional nature of the problem which has implications on almost all UN specialized organizations (UNEP, WHO, UNDP, IMO, UNIDO ...) and should also be taken into account in negotiations led within the WTO.
2. Mrs. **Clementine d’Outremont**, Senior Research Fellow at the Egmont Institute, recalled that the current state of the planet reflects the conscience of our common humanity. The consequences of climate change occur as a result of the impact of human actions on the planet: pollution, natural disasters, stress on natural resources, wars, migration, governance deficit, etc. These are huge challenges for the humanity to address, which require a profound change of individual behaviors and a new system of global governance based on an inter-civilization dialogue and a long-term vision. It is exactly what COP21 is about. It is the occasion to develop new global governance based on trust and confidence among countries. The decisive stake behind this conference is thus not only about safeguarding our planet; it is also about defining together who we are as humanity.

3. Mr. **Brice Lalonde**, Special Advisor on Sustainable Development to the UN Global Compact and ex- Executive Coordinator for the Rio+20 Conference, mentioned that he was reasonably optimistic on the outcome of the COP21 as there are some signs of success. It is the first time that the strategy is universal and that each country had announced its objectives. But the financing was the problem or at least the excuse. He insisted on the fact that it would imply a real change in our economies which in turn requires (1) the involvement of all concerned, starting from the top decision-makers (Heads of State, G20), (2) massive public and private fund mobilization, (3) long term vision, which industry was better at than politicians, and (4) technological innovations.
4. Mr. **Philippe Lamberts**, Member of the European Parliament as co-Chair of the Greens /EFA political group and member of the Committee for Economic & Monetary Affairs (ECON), shared some of the views expressed by Brice Lalonde. He underlined that whereas the fight against global warming is, unfortunately, often perceived as a burden on the economy (such as the carbon taxes), we don't sufficiently realize that it is the very fate of humanity which is at stake. The economy has to change and adapt in order to serve mankind, and not the other way around. He insisted on the need to change the entire economy and the society. He believes the issue for Europe is to build a green economy, where it would gain a comparative advantage and increased competition and value added through innovations, renewables, labor intensive technologies, energy efficiency, recycling, etc. For that purpose, decisions should be freed from corporate lobbies.
5. **Professor Jan Wouters**, President of the VVN association, warned that we don't have a planet B, and called on possible contributions from the UN institutions, from civil society and from academy, especially to foster and accept the required changes. He also moderated the debate between the speakers as well as with the audience during the Q & A period.
6. Professor O. De Schutter concluded by mentioning that where there is a will there is a way. As far as financing is concerned, while it has been agreed in Copenhagen that US\$ 100 billion are needed on an annual basis between now and 2020 to finance the required adaptations to climate change in developing countries, a financing need which is seen as one of the main bottlenecks in the negotiations, we should keep in mind that the amount of profits which multinationals make in developing countries but repatriate in industrialized countries or in tax havens are estimated at US\$ 678 billion per year, and that the reimbursement of the foreign debt of the developing countries amount to some US\$ 183 billion annually. In other terms, the costs of financing adaptation should not be seen as the obstacle; the obstacle is the absence of political will to do what it takes to ensure that all countries, acting together, put the Earth on a sustainable development path.

N.B. Let us remind that the goals set by the EC are: (1) to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020 and by 40% by 2030, compared to 1990; (2) to increase the renewable energy sources by 20% by 2020 and by at least 27% by 2030; and (3) to increase the energy efficiency by 20% by 2020 and by at least 27% by 2030.