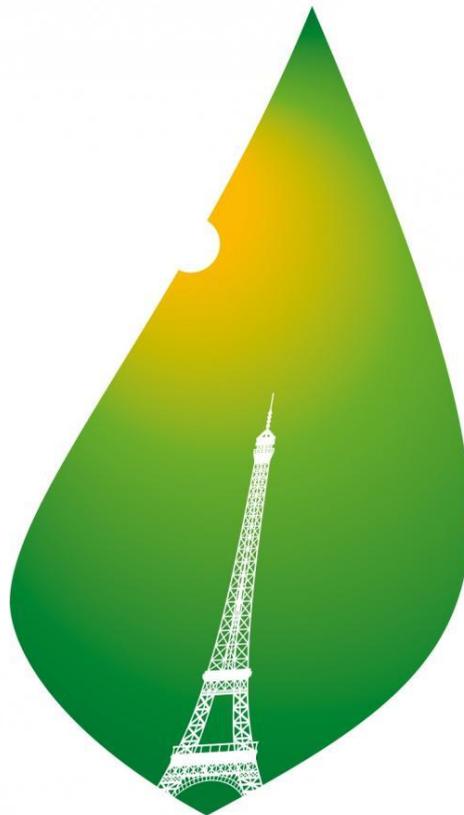


IFSA Delegation Report

UNFCCC COP21

Nov 30th – Dec 12th 2015

Paris, France



COP21 • CMP11

PARIS 2015

UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

by Niclas Aleff
11th April 2016
niclas.aleff.ifs@gmail.com

Table of Content

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	3
UNFCCC.....	3
Parties.....	3
The COP	4
Paris Agreement	5
IFSA's role in UNFCCC	6
IFSA's Participation.....	7
Delegation	7
Conference of Youth 11	8
Side Events	8
Conclusion	9
COP21 Delegation Blog	10
Day 1 is over! – Impressions of the 1st day of COP21 in Paris (Jakob Hörl)	10
Forests at the centre stage: the Lima-Paris Action Agenda Focus on Forests (Olivia Sanchez Badini).....	12
Will sea level continue to rise infinitely? (Simon Lhoest)	16
COP 21, not just a negotiating process (Jesse Way)	17
Search for Positivity (Niclas Aleff)	19
The impossible can become possible (Andrea Vasquez)	21

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UNFCCC

The UNFCCC is an international treaty that was negotiated at the Earth Summit 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. The aim of the convention is to limit greenhouse gas emissions in order to tackle the challenge of climate change. In 2016 197 parties have ratified the convention. Therefore, UNFCCC is the most important political platform to address and debate climate change.

Parties

Generally, the Parties can be divided into three major groups: Annex I Parties, Annex II Parties, and Non-Annex I Parties.

Annex I Parties include the industrialized countries that were members of the OECD(Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) in 1992, and countries with economies in transition (EIT Parties). The latter are Russia, the Baltic States, and several Eastern European states.

Annex II Parties consist of the OECD members of Annex I excluding the EIT Parties. Annex II Parties are required to provide technology transfer and financial and technical support to EIT Parties and developing countries in order for them to adapt to climate change and undertake mitigation efforts.

Non-Annex I Parties are mostly developing countries and receive financial aid, technical advice, and capacity building from the developed countries according to the Convention.

The 195 member parties organize themselves in various interest groups. For example there is the Alliance Of Small Island States (AOSIS), which reinforces the negotiative power of this particularly vulnerable group of states by agreeing on a common opinion. Another group is the African Group, which represents common points made by the African states. The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) comprise some of the world's poorest countries and ensure a sufficient consideration of these countries' special needs.

Besides these developing countries' groups, also industrialized countries form groups to voice their opinions. Among these are the Umbrella Group consisting of the USA, Canada, Japan, Norway, Russia, Ukraine, New Zealand, Iceland, and Australia, or the Environmental Integrity Group (EIG) that comprises Mexico, South Korea, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, and

Monaco. The European states are organized within the European Union and most of their negotiations are being undertaken in the name of the EU.

The COP

The Conference of Parties (COP) is the supreme decision making body of the UNFCCC. It is held annually and hosted by a different party each year. The major purpose of the conference is to review the implementation of the convention as well as to discuss and agree on arrangements and measures to successfully implement the convention.



Typically, a UNFCCC COP lasts two weeks. In the first week, scientific results are being presented and discussed by two main groups: the

Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI). These two groups meet throughout the year to investigate scientific data and technical solutions as well as to explore the challenges of implementing the policies on the ground.

Besides the meetings of SBSTA and SBI the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) hold meetings to finalize a draft agreement of the conference which also assists delegations in their preparations for the negotiations.

In the second week, the High-level Segments are being introduced by an official opening ceremony where the current COP president, the UNFCCC secretary, and other official representatives welcome the ministers of the participating countries. Throughout the second week, presidents and environmental ministers of the countries hold speeches about their countries' concerns. They voice their countries' official position and announce their commitments for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The last days at a COP are dominated by intense, open ended, and very exhausting discussions until a definite document has been concluded.

For the past two decades, COP's most prominent task has been to agree on a Post-Kyoto-Agreement, which will supersede the well-known Kyoto-Protocol in 2020. The COP failed to do so at COP15 in Copenhagen 2009, thus the Kyoto-Protocol was extended in Durban at COP17 2011. At COP18 in Durban 2012 the parties agreed to limit the period of validity of the Kyoto extension to 2020.



Additionally the Durban document scheduled a final Post-Kyoto-Agreement for 2015. Hence expectations for COP21 were high as by many it was seen as last chance to successfully come to a universal legally binding agreement to effectively limit climate change.

Paris Agreement

Prior to COP21 all parties were asked to submit their individual "Intended Nationally Determined Contribution" (INDC). These commitments partly formed the base of the Paris negotiations as they attested the parties' self set contributions to tackle climate change. 187 parties submitted INDCs preceding COP21, the suggested commitments were estimated to limit climate change to no more than 2.7°C. Thus signs to reach the 2°C-goal were not very promising when the negotiations started on November 30th.

The final outcome of the Paris Agreement and its key decisions may be summarized as follows:

In order to enhancing the implementation of the convention the first goal of the agreement is to limit "[...]the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels [...]". This goal was mainly brought forward by countries of the Southern Hemisphere such as the AOSIS who are strongly affected by climate change already. Also the EU-led High Ambition Coalition played an important role in promoting the ambitious 1.5°C-goal.

The Paris Agreement also envisages to increase "[...] the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production".

Furthermore, the Agreement shall foster to "Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development". To serve this goal industrialized countries agreed to provide 100 billion US Dollar yearly from 2020 to 2025 to support energy transition, improvement of climate resilience and to compensate damages cause by climate change in developing countries. The money will be partly from private capital investments and partly from governmental funds. Strong emerging countries like China are encouraged to contribute to the financial support of developing countries as well.

Another declared goal of the Agreement is to "reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible [...] so as to achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions [...] and removals by sinks [such as forests and oceans] of greenhouse gases in the second half of the century". The progress being made in the implementation of the Agreement will be reviewed and if necessary revised with the aid of a global stocktake. This evaluation will be every five years, starting in 2023.

The Agreement is yet to be ratified and signed by at least 55 parties which together must be responsible for at least 55% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Critics are worried that big players like USA or China will on short notice deny their approval. Also some voices call for a stronger binding agreement with tools and measures to punish parties that don't achieve their intended reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.

Find the Paris Agreement here:

<https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09r01.pdf>.

IFSA's role in UNFCCC

IFSA has been involved in the international processes of the United Nations for many years, and is a by UNFCCC admitted NGO. Each year, the IFSA International Processes Commission (IPC) organizes student delegations to attend conferences and meetings hosted by UNFCCC. IFSA as a non-political, non religious, and nonprofit organization participates in the UNFCCC processes as an observer from the civil society. The main objectives of IFSA's participation

are to give members the opportunity to attend high profile events such as COP, to raise the voice of youth in accordance with the IFSA-community, but also to critically observe the political processes of climate change negotiations in order to be able to report about the events and personal experiences to fellow IFSA-members as well as schools, communities, etc..

UNFCCC's major event is the annually held COP where all 197 parties that ratified the convention meet to discuss the progress made in climate change negotiations and work on agreements to effectively tackle the challenges mankind already is and will be facing in the future.

IFSA's Participation

Delegation

This year's delegation counted ten students from six nations (Belgium, Canada, Germany, Indonesia, Peru, Spain) and four different continents. Five students attended the first and



the other five students the second week. The delegation was very diverse in terms of heritage, age, and experience in high profile events like COP. The inhomogeneity was a great gain for the delegation as it led to a lively exchange and dialogue between the participants as most came from very different backgrounds and had very different interests and intentions. The choice of

delegates prior to COP was made after the criterions described above. The delegation should be as diverse as possible, also the selection committee tried to favor delegates from less developed countries.

Most delegates were accommodated together in an Airbnb apartment near the exhibition site "Le Bourget". Thanks to the common accommodation it was



relatively easy to arrange (even if only short) daily meetings and schedule the days in accordance with each other.

Besides the actual COP all delegates attended the Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) which is the largest side event of COP, and marks the halftime of COP as it takes place on the middle weekend when negotiations rest. During that weekend the attendance of week one and week two delegates overlapped and many experiences were shared and discussed.

Conference of Youth 11

From the 26th to the 28th of November 2015 the eleventh edition of the Conference of Youth (COY) was held in Paris. COY traditionally precedes the climate negotiations at COP and is an international gathering of young people. In 2009, youth was recognized as real group by the UNFCCC as well as all parties of the convention. The purpose of COY is to provide a platform for youth to learn, debate, and take action in and about climate change.

COY11 was a special occasion for IFSA because it was the first time for the organization to take part in this event. Organizers from COY11, namely Oliver Rousselle from France, approached the IPC with the suggestion to have an IFSA-run workshop at COY. On short notice IFSA-council-member Gabrielle Schittecatte together with members of the IPC created an interactive workshop called "Around the world in 60 Minutes: Exploring International Relationship between Youth, Forests, and Understanding their Importance". The workshop was a great opportunity to increase IFSA's involvement in youth activities around COP and an ongoing commitment in future COYs is desirable.

Side Events

COP hosts hundreds of side events organized by states, organizations, and companies to specific topics. Topics such as national emission strategies, challenges for minorities, or

financing opportunities are being presented to the audience. The range of topics is so wide and diverse that it is impossible to name them all.

As member of an organization with observer status the access to actual negotiations and speeches is very limited. For this reason the attendance at side events and open discussions takes up most of IFSA-delegate's time.

The largest of all side events is the GLF, which goes for two days, marks the halftime of COP and itself hosts many presentations, panel discussions and speeches. The focus of this side event is on land use challenges, with many often rather technical presentations. This year's GLF was a very special occasion for the COP delegation as IFSA played a relatively big role in the organization of the GLF. Well over 50 IFSA members from several countries travelled to Paris to attend GLF and some also participated in the Youth in Landscapes Initiative (YIL). Some of the highlights from an IFSA-perspective were the great YIL, a presentation on indigenous communities by Andrea Vasquez, the moderation of the closing ceremony by Olivia Sanchez Badini, and the outstanding speech on youth's role in climate change and willingness to shape its future by Salina Abraham.

Find Salina's speech here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3j3iKIW_BtA.

Conclusion

COP certainly is one of biggest and most important events one can attend through IFSA. The numerous side events, speeches, demonstrations, press conferences, and the sheer size of the event make it very desirable for students to attend. Being at COP is an indescribable opportunity to learn about climate change, equality, justice, policy making processes, and many more topics.

COP21 was a very special COP to attend as against many expectations the negotiations finally closed with an agreement which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to a level that limits average global warming to 2°C.

The diversity of the delegation enriched all delegate's experience as it led to many different opinions and interesting as well as informative discussions.

Because of the high amount of admitted NGO's IFSA's role at COP is literally not more than the one of an observer. For future COP's it could be desirable to get more committed to active networks like the Climate Action Network (CAN). The delegation could benefit from

connections like that as they provide additional inside information about the negotiation processes and are very helpful to keep up with all kind of news around COP and UNFCCC.

COP21 Delegation Blog

At COP21, for the first time IFSA-delegates documented their thoughts, impressions and experiences by writing/videoing a blog/vlog. This idea originated from a survey that the



International Processes Commission launched preceding COP. The survey was sent to all seven IFSA regions and asked for topics that are of the biggest interest for IFSA-members and for their favored channel of communication.

The blog was a full success. During the time of COP the delegation posted 36 blogs and vlogs, which had roughly 1200 visitors and 3500 views. In the section below is only an exemplary selection of the blogs.

For further blogs visit: <https://ifsacop21.wordpress.com/>.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this blog are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the International Forestry Students' Association.

Day 1 is over! – Impressions of the 1st day of COP21 in Paris (Jakob Hörl)

The first day of COP21 is over and we are back in our apartment. Our brains are still steaming from today's experiences and impressions. Our feet hurt from having walked at least 20 km through conference halls and corridors to attend interesting side-events and see different sessions. The security check and registration has been less crowded than expected and we could make our way in pretty easily. To reach the site of the COP21, we just had to catch one of the shuttle busses provided for free by the French organisers. The venue itself

is located on an ancient airport in the north of Paris, where a temporary village consisting of halls and huge white tents has been erected.

Going to the venue, one could clearly see that the French government is taking security measures serious. The closer you get, the more police officers with machine guns are



patrolling cross-roads and blocking-off streets. Nevertheless the situation is calm and peaceful.

Inside the event, it feels like a different world, a microcosmos of people from all over the world. You can hear people speaking all sort of different languages, some are wearing their traditional

costumes. Camera teams are walking up and down the corridors, trying to catch politicians and important people. Delegates are flowing in and out of sessions and everybody seems (or pretends) to be very important. So it happens that you run into Al Gore, who is surrounded by people wanting to take a picture with him. Or you see Vandana Shiva giving a live interview at a French TV station.

It takes us a while to figure out everything works here and to get an overview of the site. There are different areas. One for observer organisations, where many NGOs have their booths and show the work they are doing related to climate change. Another one houses country pavilions in which countries present themselves and host side-events. Some provide free coffee and juices, others have warm lunches.

This time, some of us had their lunch at the Indonesian pavilion, which served traditional Indonesian cuisine. However, as they were one of the only ones doing so, the buffet quickly became crowded and people started to push to get to the



food. It was interesting to watch how even high politicians in prospect of free food would spare no efforts to fill their own plate. Such behaviour is very reflective for the prevailing

human nature and maybe is exactly the reason, why so far nothing has happened to fight climate change.

Today was also special, as many important heads of states have attended the opening ceremony of the COP21. However, we could only feel that something important is going on, as all NGO representatives were denied access to the plenary sessions. The speeches itself, we could only follow on large TV screen hanging on the walls around the conference venue. So we ended up attending many side-events that focus on particular issues and invite experts of certain topics to present them to a wider audience. The aim of these side-events is to inform decision makers and through that have influence on the ongoing discussions. Our first impressions was that the quality of side-events was highly fluctuating. Some where really good and well organised and others did not have translators. During one that was organised by some Chinese organisations, it was just impossible to attend, as non of us speaks Chinese.

Overall, we can say that our first day was very fruitful for the IFSA delegation at the COP21. We managed to get an overview of the location and attended most of the side-events. We are looking forward to tomorrow and will report more into detail about on-going negotiations and happenings during the conference.

Cheers from Paris!

Forests at the centre stage: the Lima-Paris Action Agenda Focus on Forests

(Olivia Sanchez Badini)

These past few days at COP21 have been *huge* for forests! For the first time ever, heads of government from sixteen major forest and donor countries released a [joint statement](#) endorsing forests as a key climate solution. As part of this, the governments of Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom announced a [collective aim](#) to provide \$5 billion between 2015-2020 to reduce emissions from tropical deforestation through REDD+ performance-based payments – almost five times higher than the \$1.1 billion that have been paid since 2009 for verified emission reductions!

Although a far cry from the [estimated \\$20 billion a year](#) needed to halve deforestation at a global level, this announcement sends a major policy signal placing high-level importance on forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation. It builds on previous pledges made last year through the [New York Declaration on Forests](#) (an action statement to end tropical

deforestation by 2030 and halve it by 2020), and includes specific pledges such as continued support for Brazil's Amazon Fund.

And today, the entire morning was dedicated to forests as part of the Lima-Paris Action Agenda (LPAA) [Focus on Forests event](#). The LPAA is a declaration that was made in December 2014 to provide a platform for collaboration between state and non-state actors as a way of strengthening climate action beyond COP21, including taking robust steps towards low-carbon, climate-resilient societies. The LPAA initiatives specifically addressing forests include the [New York Declaration on Forests](#), [protection of 400 million ha of forests by indigenous peoples](#), the [Lima Challenge](#), the [Landscape Restoration initiative](#), and [zero deforestation commitments from commodity producers and traders](#).

"There is no climate solution without forests" – Felipe Calderón, former President of Mexico

I attended the LPAA Focus on Forest for the [last three sessions](#), which included panels on Latin America and Global Partnerships with government and non-state actor leaders (from Peru, Paraguay, Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, WWF, FAO, WB, GEF, Norway, Consumer Goods Forum, International Indigenous Forum on Climate Change), as well as the Closing Remarks by former Mexican President Felipe Calderón. Here are my five take-away points:

1. There is a clear stated commitment to protect forests. With an unprecedented awareness and clear science on the importance on forests, the discourse has shifted away from what it was a few years ago: from asking *why*, to asking *how*. As such, a firmer step is being taken towards full-fledged implementation. Reliable information on forests is crucial for both implementation and accountability, and technology is an important enabler.
2. Cross-sectoral collaborations are strong and ongoing in the conversations about deforestation and forest degradation – involving agriculture, energy, and a myriad other sectors. Put forward directly by Mexico in its opening statement, the idea of an integrated synergistic approach was also visible in the room with Paraguay: both the Minister Secretary of the Environment and the Director General of Itaipu Binacional hydroelectric power plant, "the world's largest generator of renewable clean

energy”, were present. Through Itaipu clean energy projects, it is estimated 7ha of forest are protected for every MW produced.

3. The involvement of the private sector and non-state actors plays an increasingly important role. For instance, governments are partnering with the private sector to transform supply chains to become deforestation-free, and leveraging hundreds of billions of private investments in forestry and agriculture. Similarly, something that emerged repeatedly was the importance of focusing on and cooperating with small and medium enterprises.
4. Related to all of the aforementioned points, the role of partnerships (such as public-private partnerships) is emerging as an instrumental way for moving forward.
5. Conserving our forests and reducing deforestation and forest degradation in the tropics is a global effort that can only succeed if all actors work in unison. This includes the tropical countries themselves (e.g. through public policies, land tenure reforms), the international community (e.g. major donors), and non-state actors, such as the private sector. There is no way forward without political will, honest commitments, and cooperation.

“The private sector can, will, and must be part of the solution” – Tine Sundtoft, Minister of Climate and the Environment, Norway

The LPAA Focus on Forests was a historic session, and a kind I had never personally attended before. Including opening remarks by the President of the Republic of Peru Ollanta Humala Tasso, the Prince of Wales, and Minister Ségolène Royal, it was certainly out of the ordinary to be sitting a few meters away from these important global players – CEOs, Presidents, Ministers! Besides enjoying hearing and reflecting on all their statements, I was also surprisingly pleased about the woman leadership in the Global Partnerships panel, with five out of seven panelists being women (this was not the case for the all-male Latin American panel, however).

It is also clear to me that all of the above conditions and commitments, such as the new \$5 billion pledge, will need to be vested in local interests and realities. Do you think that these commitments from governments and non-state actors at COP21 will actually make a difference on the ground, for the world’s forests and for all of us who directly and indirectly

depend on them? Have you experienced the impact of programs like REDD+ in your home country, in forestry and other sectors? Let us know your thoughts!



Stand with Forests joint declaration, November 30th. *From left to right: Mary Robinson (United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Climate Change), Amber Rudd (Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, UK), Gregory Hunt (Minister for the Environment, Australia), President Joko Widodo (Indonesia), President Ali Bongo Ondimba (Gabon), President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón (Colombia), Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada), Prime Minister Erna Solberg (Norway), Tine Sundtoft (Minister of Climate and the Environment, Norway), Gabriel Vallejo López (Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Colombia). Photo: Afp-Services / silvereg*

More information:

<http://www.ecosystemmarketplace.com/articles/norway-germany-uk-pledge-5-billion-to-combat-tropical-deforestation/>

<http://newsroom.unfccc.int/lpaa/forest/press-release-lpaa-focus-forest-partnerships-progress-to-protect-restore-forests/>

<http://standwithforests.org>

<http://newsroom.unfccc.int/lpaa/forest/lima-challenge-bridging-the-emissions-gap-by-forest-intervention/>

<http://forest-trends.org/blog/2015/11/30/new-finance-commitments-for-forests-build-momentum-in-paris/>

Will sea level continue to rise infinitely? (Simon Lhoest)

Hello IFSA World!

On Wednesday, I attended a really interesting side event about the necessary actions to maintain healthy and resilient oceans. The first assumptions are that water temperature is globally rising, as well as sea level. In parallel, the acidification of oceans is an important issue too. Oceanic ecosystems are also changing extremely rapidly in particular with the responses of ocean life (relocating, dying and dwindling). The key actions to implement are the following:

Keep global average temperature below 2°C above the Pre-Industrial Period to maintain healthy oceans and avoid too many serious changes which are already occurring;

Reduce non-climate change stressors in order to build resilience;

Pursue an IPCC Special Report specifically focused on Oceans to rapidly reduce the gaps and our vulnerability to a changing ocean.

With the current sea level rise observations and tsunami early warning systems, it is now possible to adapt to climate change in some ways, even if it is not enough.

An important part of the debate was also focusing on the notion of “blue carbon” (and also “blue economy”), which corresponds to healthy coasts which have absorbed carbon for millennia and constitute more than 50% of global carbon stocks. Moreover, marine ecosystems are lost seven times faster than land ecosystems. The adaptation based on ecosystems was also highlighted. It is defined as reducing vulnerability and enhancing adaptability by maintaining and restoring ecosystems.

In concrete terms, what is at stake for the oceans? First, **10%** of the world’s population lives in low elevation coastal zone and **145 million** live less than one meter above the high water mark. Then, **three-quarters** of all large cities are located on the coast. Ports are also key-nodes in global supply-chains and vital for global trade: **over 80%** of the volume of world merchandise trade (**70%** by value) is carried by sea – from port to port. Moreover, the ocean generates **hundreds of millions** of jobs in tourism, fishing, energy, shipping, biotechnology and many other sectors. The annual “gross marine product” totals **at least US\$2.5 trillion**.

Last but not least, fish and fishery products provide essential protein and nutrients to **over 3 billion** people.

It is then essential to talk also about the oceans when working on a global agreement on climate change. We can hope that COP21 negotiations will take all of those stakes into account.

COP 21, not just a negotiating process (Jesse Way)

Here in Paris at COP21 there seems to be two camps of people when it comes to how we can collectively address the monstrosity of a challenge that is climate change. On the one side there is a large contingent of those that believe we can buy our way to the solution and that if we throw enough money at the problem we will surely solve the issues at hand.

This concept is brought forth repeatedly in the various side events at COP 21. International Organization A, or High Level Expert B discuss how well they understand the challenge of climate change, they go on to describe the amazing work they or their organization are doing to come up with solutions and they congratulate one another on being leaders in the fight for a better future.

In one such event yesterday hosted by the Global Environment Facility titled, 'Beyond Grants: Innovative Blended Finance', Sean Kidney, the CEO of Climate Bonds Initiative, offered his ideal future as one in that COPs of the future would not be negotiated by Environment Ministers but by Treasurers as the problem of climate change would be addressed by making the right investments in 'green' finance and 'clean' technologies. Through such 'green' investments the argument goes, we will be able to move towards a carbon free future where all new technologies are 'sustainable' and alleviate as opposed to contribute to a changing climate.

Somewhat in the shadows at COP21 there remains a second camp of people, a camp that seems to still sit somewhat on the sidelines of the conversation, still struggling to have their voices heard.

There is no doubt in my own mind that these so called green investments in clean technologies, whether it be renewable energy infrastructure for solar and wind power or electric vehicles and more energy efficient appliances, are all an essential component of a more environmentally friendly future.

But is it enough?

Many of us believe that a more fundamental shift in how our society and we as human beings perceive and interact with the world around us is necessary. In order to change our actions we must alter our behaviour, this requires a change of attitude which in turn relies upon a transition in the way in which we think. No small task to be certain.

My view and that of many of us in this second camp of people is that the true problem at hand is a growing disconnect between us as human beings and the natural world that sustains us. We consume without consciousness, having little or no idea of the environmental impact of our consumptive behaviours.

We must find ways of reconnecting with the world around us to better understand how our daily behaviour and routine actions impact our environment.

To me the problem we face is an ecological one. We as human beings are a mammalian species of planet Earth for which we are consuming our resources beyond the carrying capacity of our environment.

How much water did it take to grow the food we ate for breakfast? How much land was required to grow the cotton in the clothes that we are wearing? How many trees were cut down to build the houses in which we live? What was the impact of the mining operations to find, extract and manufacture the rare earth metals in our electronics? These are questions we should be asking of ourselves and of each other.

We must reconnect with our environment and reacquaint ourselves with the natural world around us.

In lieu of being another skeptic with a myriad of complaints and criticisms but no solutions I offer you this: GROW (some of) YOUR OWN FOOD. Reconnect with the soil and the water, get your hands dirty and become once again a part of – instead of apart from – the ecological processes that govern our lives.

What good will this do you may ask. Who am I to offer such suggestions you may question.

Well I am a youth with a voice, a person with ideas.

We must not remain silent any longer. IFSA member Salina Abraham at the closing address of the Global Landscapes Forum stood up and made her voice and the voice of youth heard loud and clear and we must too!

[\(If you haven't already check out her speech here!\)](#)

We are not merely youth of the future, we are people of the present and our ideas and opinions matter.

We all have something to contribute and offer in the dialogue on how do we move forward towards a more just and equitable world. My experience here in Paris and so far at COP 21 has more than anything instilled in me a drive to take action and make my voice heard.

So I will offer my own suggestion for a better future once more, GROW YOUR OWN FOOD, reconnect with the natural world and stand up and let your voice be heard!

What are your ideas? What are your solutions? Share them with the world!

Search for Positivity (Niclas Aleff)

Reading our previous blogs I noticed a lot of negativity, caused by the critical style of writing. There are a lot of things at COP21 that should be questioned and looked at from a critical perspective. However, not everything at COP is bad, and therefore as well as the simple reason that I'm tired of writing about negative topics I went on a mission today: The search for positive topics.

The venue at Le Bourget is subdivided into different areas. Today I exclusively went to the part which is open to the French public, called Climate Generation Area. Even being only a few hundred meters away from the so called Blue Zone, the tents accommodating Climate Generation have their own unique vibe. As soon as I had passed the security check and had entered the big entrance hall I was welcomed by the dances and songs of the "Children of the setting Sun", a group of young Native Americans from the Lummi tribe. It was a completely different atmosphere to that I had experienced the previous three days. People seemed a lot more relaxed, and less important, yet very interested and curious.



I was very pleased with my first impression and decided to get myself a map of the venue and start exploring the different exhibition rooms. It was a lot of fun to walk from stand to stand, talk to and discuss with people about their projects, heritage, but most importantly their passion. This way I met Tom, an elderly man from California who told me about his NGO, kyotoUSA.org, an organization which helps cities, schools, and communities to develop sustainable strategies to reduce climate altering greenhouse gas emissions. Shortly after having been talking to Tom I

entered what was referred to as the Villa, an apartment which's interior was mainly

consisting of climate smart products largely manufactured from recycled materials. The Villa is run by shamengo.com a website that provides a platform for entrepreneurs from across the globe to promote their inventions and ideas towards a greener and more sustainable world.

By the time I entered the second exhibition room I was already very happy with the day. The conversations I have had and the great activism which I witnessed at Generation Climate was very inspiring and motivating.

The second room wasn't very different from the previous one, a lot of stands focusing on all different kinds of topics, but there was one particular stand that arrested my special attention. The stand was part of an art project called "Smog Tasting". The idea is simple yet brilliant. Artists and workshop participants use egg foams, which consist up to 90% out of air, to capture a sample of the surrounding air. The egg foams absorb not only the air but also all other particular matter in the air like heavy metals and VOCs. These samples have been taken in many places across the



world to taste the air quality. After taking the sample it can either be analyzed in a lab or be baked and served to people, the second option is what they did at their stand. I was so fortunate to try the London Pea-Soup-Smog from 1952, an experience that I would've been happy to miss out on. What I really like about this stand is the way arts and sciences are used to emphasize the direct link between pollution and our health.

Summarizing my day, I think I found what I've been looking for. The Generation Climate is the complementary other side of COP. The past three days have been very technical and abstract, today was completely different. Instead of high profile politicians, scientists and functionaries, people from across society were the centre of attention, presenting and addressing their solutions, problems and wishes. It was easy to identify oneself with their projects and it was great to see people acting to find small real world solutions to real world problems.



The impossible can become possible (Andrea Vasquez)

Two great Mother Earth defenders were present on the last day of COP 21 in the public area. They were accompanied by Valerie Cabanes (human rights lawyer), and Gert Peter Brucht (Planete Amazone). The room was packed and it was almost impossible to enter, but thanks to a miracle I found myself in front of Cacique Raoni Metuktire (Kayapó indigenous leader from Brazil) and Paul Watson (president of Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, NGO that works to protect marine life and ecosystems). Listening their words of wisdom I was able taste their strength, which made me feel empowered and gave me hope.

Some highlights stated by the panelists in the session were:

- Because of the vast amounts of international waters that are unseen and unmonitored there is constant abuse and over exploitation of the marine life. Sea Shepherd have implemented a navy of nine ships ocean guardians which constantly navigate around the world intervening about illegal activities.
- Although there is good legislation that could be useful to care our oceans, there is lack of economic a political motivation to implement them, so the super powers get to do what they want.
- Land defenders are dying but the news don't talk about this. Most of media and politics are owned by companies so, we have to force them to serve the people instead. We can't depend on these guys.
- In order to start a revolution is needed 7% of the world population that is engaged and committed to change the *status quo*. However, what is really going to motivate people is when nature start to hit the population harder. We have to do it, otherwise we will die.

- Promote a biocentric instead of and anthropocentric paradigms.
- Introduce in the international law system a 5th crime, ecocide. Ecocide refers to the attack against Nature (oceans, tree species, animals, etc). This crime takes place when the living conditions, not just for human beings but for the rest of the creation, are destroyed during present and future contexts.

"Devastation have been created by the course of European companies. Dams are horrendously catastrophic for us, in addition to these dams [other impacts] can be encountered everywhere. This is detrimental for us"—Cacique Raoni Metuktire

"We need to follow the leadership of indigenous peoples because we already forgot that we are not the center of the creation"—Paul Watson



With Raoni Metuktire

The final message from the panelists was that our governments are not going to do what we need and address the root causes of global warming, so the people have to do it. Although these ideas are not just thoughts discussed by indigenous peoples or organizations that work with social and environmental justice but also within several sessions in the COP 21, not much is reflected on official agreements. As civil society/the people and grassroots movements, there is certainly more work we have to do.