

MAJALAT: The Brussels Civil Society Forum 7 - 9 July 2021, Online

Concept Note: *Climate Justice*

1. Context

Climate change is a global and existential threat that impacts all aspects of life and economy. It is particularly acute in the Southern Mediterranean, a region deeply affected by long-standing structural economic problems, droughts and health crises. Existing problems were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which hit the world in 2020 and whose impacts continue to be felt in 2021.

The pandemic has exacerbated the consequences of decades of laxity in dealing with the economy and climate change. The combined effects of the economic, the health and the climate crisis have had a disastrous impact on people and business, with poor and vulnerable populations suffering the most.

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Finally, lack of policies and measures to compensate people and mitigate the effects of climate change have led to breaking point entire populations already suffering from rising temperatures, water scarcity, and increasing desertification.

Global warming will continue to impact the world and the region, with threats over water availability and food security, health and human security. People, particularly women living in rural areas, who are often excluded from decision-making on access and use of land and resources, risk total loss of livelihoods. It has become urgent to adopt bold policies and take concrete measures that protect social and climate justice in the region.

World leaders meeting at COP24 in Katowice, Poland (2018) adopted an implementation handbook consistent with limiting global warming to 1.5°C as set in the Paris Agreement, but failed to provide for fair and inclusive transition. Representatives of civil society were excluded from negotiations in COP25, held in Madrid, Spain in 2019. Initially scheduled in 2020, COP26 will be held in Glasgow in November 2021. It is unclear what space of debate will be given to social and climate justice and to the role of civil society organisations in the fight against climate change. With the end of the Covid-19 crisis in sight, and the imperatives of social and economic recovery, it will be essential to ensure that economies ‘build back better’ and ‘leave no one behind’. Economic recovery needs to be inclusive and environmentally sustainable in order to support the low carbon transition in the Southern Mediterranean. So what lessons can be learned from the Covid-19 crisis in dealing with climate change? Can the Green Deal and the Paris Agreement offer a real path for economic resilience and green recovery in the Southern Mediterranean? How can the EU ensure civil society will be included in discussions and its potential in promoting green recovery and a fair transition in the region harnessed?

2. MAJALAT recommendations and selected priorities for further development

In the past three years, MAJALAT organized a series of meetings, consultations and webinars on climate



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and social justice and EU climate policies towards the region, including a high-level debate in the context of the 2019 Civil Society Forum, during which participants voiced concern over the consequences of insufficient action by Europe and the Southern Mediterranean on climate. The findings and conclusions of this event and a series of webinars organised on the issue in June and July 2020, highlighted the necessity to address climate justice and social justice jointly in the Millennium Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. Inequalities, the need to counter social injustices, access to clean energy, the fight against poverty, and gender equality must be taken into account in environmental action and the fight against global warming.

Webinar discussions and recommendations revolved around the following points:

- Raising awareness among decision-makers, the private sector, unions and the wider public on climate emergency and the importance to develop resilient economic and social models;
- Creating green jobs, for example in water and waste management, biodiversity, etc.
- Balancing investments between large and small local projects that are locally sustainable in terms of countering climate change;
- Improving access to social services, especially for women, access to social security, and access to health services.
- Protecting indigenous people, environmental activists and whistleblowers against attacks and discrimination, and guaranteeing their protection and their right to protect the environment. Particular attention should be given to the situation of Palestinians living under unlawful Israeli occupation.

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- Involvement of CSOs in climate policies and programmes and the adoption of measures that ensure that funds allocated to the Southern Neighbourhood support climate justice and civil society can have access to them.

The following key questions emerged from the debate:

1. What measures has the EU taken to extend the spirit of the Green Deal in the region and involve CSOs?
2. What are the different communication and advocacy tools that can be put in place to raise awareness on the negative impacts of climate change, promote resilient and sustainable economic models and counter fake discourse and climate change denial in the public debate?
3. What measures can be put in place to protect environmental rights defenders and uphold climate justice¹, including through the strengthening of freedom of association, freedom of demonstration and freedom of expression and involvement of CSOs?

1

.In a **report** entitled « *Defenders of the earth* » published this July 13th, *Global Witness* documented 200 killings of environmental defenders across the globe in 2016 alone. **197 killings of defenders were documented** by *Global Witness*, in collaboration with *The Guardian* in 2017 and more than 160 in 2018. See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/06/why-we-need-to-stand-up-for-earth-defenders-this-world-environment-day/>

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The following specific recommendations emerged from the 2019 Brussels Civil Society Forum:

- In the context of the EU budget 2021-27 and future NDICI, decision-makers should safeguard: Funding for Heading VI (external action) at least 10% of the overall budget; For the NDICI a 50% climate and environment spending target should be introduced ; 85% of programmes should have gender equality as one of their objectives; 20% ODA should be dedicated to human development and social inclusion;
- All targets set in the NDICI should be duly reflected in EU Commission programming at country and regional level. Programming needs to support countries' NDCs, SDG, and National Adaptation Plans.
- The EU must take a strong stance in UNFCCC negotiations to scale up future climate finance goals, including a target for grants-based finance adaptation. It should adopt a definition of 'new and additional' climate finance as over and above 0.7% GNI commitments.
- Climate and SDG priorities and funding local actors should be reflected in EU blending facilities - European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD), external action guarantee, and all international and development finance institutions.
- EFSD should support the energy transition and climate mitigation and adaptation projects. Environmental screening and impact assessments must be expanded. EU programmes and reporting of external funds should demonstrate these priorities were considered.
- Regional and, where appropriate, thematic programmes should embrace climate neutrality objectives.
- MDB/DFIs should urgently phase out any finance for climate harmful activities. EU representatives should work to influence the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and finance institutions which cooperate to phase out fossil fuel finance.
- The European Investment Bank (EIB) and EBRD need to take further steps to ensure an increasing proportion of their funding support climate action, with special provisions for community- based initiatives and land rights. Both need to develop investment strategies compatible with the 1.5oC goal. The banks should increase their co-financing of UNFCCC climate funds (GCF).
- A corporate due diligence mechanism at EU level is needed to ensure that corporations fulfil their responsibility to protect human rights, labour rights, environmental rights and alignment with the Paris Agreement. The EU should also support the development of a UN binding treaty on transnational corporations and human rights.
- In fossil fuel-reliant regions, EU funding can enable a just transition by supporting efforts to develop low-carbon transition plans. The EIB and EBRD should allocate more funding to climate justice.
- The European Commission Sustainable Finance Action Plan (ECSFAP) includes the development of a taxonomy for labelling of 'green' financing options, aimed at incentivising investment in green projects and companies. The taxonomy needs to be improved to totally exclude fossil fuels including gas from the 'green' labelling, and much more rigorous sustainability criteria are needed.



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- EU delegations should regularly consult and reach out to civil society actors from grassroots, youth groups, regional networks, including climate justice defenders. Consultations should include clear guidance and information and be transparent on expectations and outcomes; regular information about opportunities and process should be provided, based on the joint programming tracker site.
- CSO's roadmaps should align better to climate and social justice priorities, and build synergies with national strategies on human rights, the Gender Action Plan, and the Aarhus Convention.
- The proposed Climate Pact under the proposed European Green Deal must cement an international dimension into its structure to facilitate a multi-stakeholder committee. This should include civil society from North and South, energy, environment and climate actors, public and private, to monitor progress on climate and social justice in EU external action.
- The EU should deepen its support of CSOs working on climate and environment at national and regional levels in the Southern Mediterranean.

Three priority topics were selected for further research, some covering several recommendations. They are:

- Impacts of the climate crisis on people in the Southern Mediterranean region
- Existing climate mitigation and climate justice policies, with general background on international commitments (Paris Agreement)
- Investments including the EU's (NDICI)

3. Research key findings



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The study highlighted the following trends:

1. Climate trends in the southern Mediterranean portend a severe degradation of habitability in the years to come, to such an extent that the region has been placed in the category of unsustainable regions and is “under high surveillance” and is a hotspot on the global climate alert map. This includes intensification and lengthening of heat waves and dry periods on already arid lands, an increased frequency of sudden and torrential rains that can cause flooding, an aggravation of air and water pollution, a decrease in forest cover, an increase in sea level, and the erosion of marine and plant biodiversity.
2. The social and economic adaptability of countries in the southern and eastern regions of the Mediterranean is generally lower than that of the northern regions, which makes them particularly vulnerable to the acceleration of desertification, aridity of soils, and depletion of water resources. In North African countries, a rise of 1 meter in sea level could affect some 37 million people (MedEEC, Risks linked to climate and environmental changes in the Mediterranean region, 2019).
3. Southern Mediterranean countries are generally below the water security threshold of 1,700 m³ per year per inhabitant. Climate change is causing a decline in natural and economic resources.

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available and therefore contributes to the hardening of conflicts, especially on the borders. Water supply will certainly be a source of conflict in the region in years and decades to come.

4. With the exception of Libya, all countries of the Southern Mediterranean have submitted a National Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In order to meet targets, they have also adopted integrated mitigation and adaptation strategies formalized in National Climate Plans. These strategies mainly cover the energy, forestry, housing, transport, industry, agriculture and waste sectors.

5. Investments in the region:
 - a. To promote the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the EU allocated 23.2 billion euros in 2019 for the fight against climate change in developing countries, an increase of almost 7% per year, compared to 2018. The EU is also the world's largest provider of official development assistance (€ 75.2 billion in total in 2019), with climate action being increasingly integrated into this aid. Finally, the funds for the Neighborhood Instrument, for Development Cooperation and for International Cooperation (NDCI) devoted to climate objectives have been raised from 25% to 45%.
 - b. The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) launched, in March 2021, a regional fund for the financing of climate projects in the Southern Mediterranean, with a start-up amount of 250 million euros. Funding will come from various sources in particular from private international investment funds and the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

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