



COP25
CHILE
MADRID 2019
UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

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#TiempoDeActuar

**Swiss Youth
For Climate at
COP25**
Summary report
December 2019



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**SWISS
YOUTH
FOR
CLIMATE**

INTRODUCTION

Since 1992, politicians and negotiators from all over the world regularly meet to negotiate international climate politics in the context of the so-called COPs, or Conferences of the Parties. The Parties are the 197 signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC), a treaty signed in Rio de Janeiro at the Earth Summit in 1992 with the goal of stabilizing the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases to limit the devastating effects of climate change. The first UNFCCC Conference of the Parties took place from 28 March to 7 April 1995 in Berlin, Germany, and since then 24 more conferences have been held all over the world. The most important ones - and some of the fewest that caught the mass media's attention - were COP3 in Kyoto and COP21 in Paris. COP3 produced the Kyoto Protocol, the first international protocol extending the 1992 UNFCCC to commit Parties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Similarly, during COP21 the Paris Agreement was adopted, which regulates the international efforts in the post-Kyoto time.

After Chile canceled its hosting of COP25 due to civil unrest, the Spanish government offered to host COP25 in December 2019 in Madrid. This was good news for Swiss Youth for Climate, which in previous years participated to all COPs since COP21 in Paris but which decided in 2019 not to go to Chile to limit its carbon footprint. Since the new location was closer and the emission costs to reach the place were therefore much less (we travelled by train and bus), we had the opportunity to take part in the conference.

As young representatives, we wanted to raise our voice on behalf of younger generations that in the last year took over the streets and claimed for more effective climate policies.

With 2020 starting days away from COP25, this COP was fundamental to finalize the pre-2020 activities and to enhance Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) up to 2025. The Katowice work program, which contains the guidelines to implement the Paris Agreement, has been agreed last year at COP24 in Poland. A few elements of the work program still needed to be finalized (Art. 6, carbon market and finance in particular) and were discussed during this COP. With our participation we wanted to make the voice of the youth to be heard and to push parties to commit to more ambition!

The following report aims at resuming the main highlights of what has happened at COP25 and at narrating to the wider public the experiences of our delegates.

We do this for two reasons: on the one hand, we care about fulfilling with SYFC's commitment of raising awareness within youth concerning international negotiation, and on the other hand it is a sign of our gratitude towards the people that supported us economically in this adventure.

Some important terms for getting around COP25¹

Adaptation	Adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities.
Carbon markets	A popular (but misleading) term for a trading system through which countries may buy or sell units of greenhouse-gas emissions in an effort to meet their national limits on emissions, either under the Kyoto Protocol or under other agreements, such as that among member states of the European Union. The term comes from the fact that carbon dioxide is the predominant greenhouse gas, and other gases are measured in units called "carbon-dioxide equivalents."
Conference of the Parties (COP)	COP is the supreme body of the UNFCCC. It currently meets once a year to review the Convention's progress. The word "conference" is not used here in the sense of "meeting" but rather of "association". The "Conference" meets in sessional periods, for example, the "fourth session of the Conference of the Parties."
Financial mechanism	To facilitate the provision of climate finance, the Convention established a financial mechanism to provide funds to developing country Parties. The financial mechanism also serves the Kyoto Protocol. The Convention states that the operation of the financial mechanism can be entrusted to one or more existing international entities. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has served as an operating entity of the financial mechanism for many years and at COP17 in 2011, Parties also decided to designate the Green Climate Fund (GCF) as an operating entity of the financial mechanism. The financial mechanism is accountable to the COP, which decides on its policies, programme priorities and eligibility criteria for funding.
Environmental Integrity Group (EIG)	EIG is a coalition or negotiating alliance consisting of Mexico, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Monaco, Georgia.
Global Environmental Facility (GEF)	The GEF is an independent financial organization that provides grants to developing countries for projects that benefit the global environment and promote sustainable livelihoods in local communities. The Parties to the Convention assigned operation of the financial mechanism to the GEF on an on-going basis, subject to review every four years. The financial mechanism is accountable to the COP.
Green Climate Fund (GCF)	At COP 16 in Cancun in 2010, Governments established a Green Climate Fund as an operating entity of the financial mechanism of the Convention under Article 11. The GCF will support projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing country Parties. The Fund will be governed by the GCF Board.

¹ For more terms and definitions, visit:

<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-convention/glossary-of-climate-change-acronyms-and-terms>

“Hot air”	Refers to the concern that some governments will be able to meet their targets for greenhouse-gas emissions under the Kyoto Protocol with minimal effort and could then flood the market with emissions credits, reducing the incentive for other countries to cut their own domestic emissions.
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)	Established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization and the UN Environment Programme, the IPCC surveys world-wide scientific and technical literature and publishes assessment reports that are widely recognized as the most credible existing sources of information on climate change. The IPCC also works on methodologies and responds to specific requests from the Convention's subsidiary bodies. The IPCC is independent of the Convention.
Kyoto Protocol	An international protocol standing on its own, and requiring separate ratification by governments, but linked to the UNFCCC. The Kyoto Protocol, among other things, sets binding targets for the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions by industrialized countries only. Its aim is to stabilise CO2 concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.
Loss and damage	At COP16 in Cancun in 2010, Governments established a work programme in order to consider approaches to address loss and damage associated with climate change impacts in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.
Mitigation	In the context of climate change, a human intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases. Examples include using fossil fuels more efficiently for industrial processes or electricity generation, switching to solar energy or wind power, improving the insulation of buildings, and expanding forests and other "sinks" to remove greater amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)	According to Article 4 paragraph 2 of the Paris Agreement, each Party shall prepare, communicate and maintain successive NDCs that it intends to achieve. Parties shall pursue domestic mitigation measures, with the aim of achieving the objectives of such contributions.
Subsidiary Body (SB)	A committee that assists the Conference of the Parties. Two permanent subsidiary bodies are created by the Convention: the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA). Two major temporary bodies that exist currently are the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP), established at COP 11 in Montreal, and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA), established at COP 13 in Bali. Additional subsidiary bodies may be established as needed.

Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI)	The SBI makes recommendations on policy and implementation issues to the COP and, if requested, to other bodies.
Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA)	The SBSTA serves as a link between information and assessments provided by expert sources (such as the IPCC) and the COP, which focuses on setting policy.
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)	UNFCCC is the international climate treaty which entered into force in 1994, with a near-universal membership (197 countries) and aims to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere in order to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interferences with the climate system.
Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) on Loss and Damage	The COP established the WIM for Loss and Damage to address loss and damage associated with impacts of climate change, including extreme events and slow onset events, in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change at COP19 (November 2013) in Warsaw, Poland.
YOUNGO	Official children and youth constituency to the UNFCCC as one of the 9 civil society constituencies.

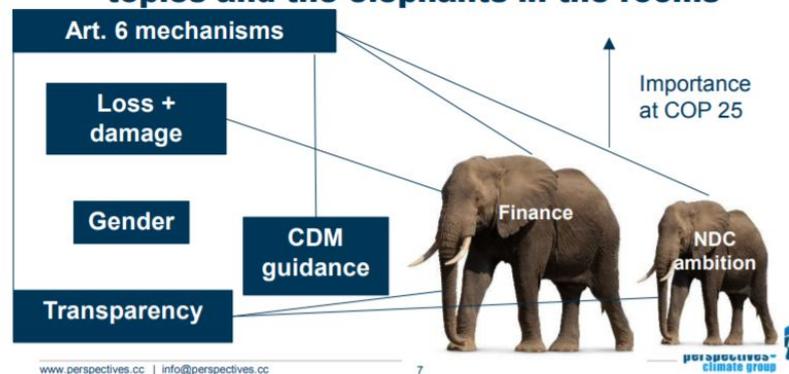
WHAT HAPPENED AT COP25?

Negotiations

Swiss Youth For Climate remained disappointed by the outcome of the world climate conference (COP25) which ended in Madrid with a record two days delay and seven nights of sleepless negotiations. The objective of the conference was to finalize the work program for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Due to contrasting positions of some Parties it was not possible to find a consensus and therefore important implementation details of the Paris Agreement such as, for example, a clear definition of mechanisms to reduce emissions abroad, will need to be agreed on the latest by COP26 - just days away from the entering into force of the Paris Agreement in 2021.

As per UNFCCC agenda, COP25 was to output the adoption of modalities and procedures for the market mechanisms under Article 6 in order to complete the Katowice work program, the review of the WIM on loss and damage and its long-term vision, and the finalization of other issues such as the Gender Action Plan. The Chilean presidency of COP25 also highlighted the importance of turning COP25 into a “Blue COP”, focusing on the role of oceans, and into an “Ambitions COP”, exploiting the momentum created by the “Ambition alliance” of countries committed to raise their NDCs or achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 launched at UN Climate Action Summit in September 2019 (where our SYFC Vice-President was selected to represent Switzerland). Although the many inspiring talks about raising ambitions, it was clear that at COP25 the largest “elephant in the room” to address was the finance gap - the 100 billions needed to allow climate action at the scale required by the Paris Agreement (as shown in this visualization by Perspectives Climate Group, 2019).

Relative importance of formal COP 25 negotiation topics and the elephants in the rooms



The negotiations opened under the best premises, with a strong media and NGO participation, larger than in Katowice but below records, and with no procedural delays. Thanks to the movement Fridays for Future and its ability to mobilize masses at unprecedented scale, climate policy had gained prominence in the year

preceding COP25 in most European political agendas and led to electoral landslides for green parties. During the two weeks of COP25, the EU Green New Deal was expected to be announced and to inject ambitions in the negotiations.

Despite the good initial spirit and the high-quality technical work of the Parties' technical bodies during the first week, the COP failed on its key topic – Article 6 regulating carbon markets and the transition to the post-Kyoto carbon emissions trading scheme, and finances. In fact, Article 6 decisions were postponed to next year. Article 6, which envisages market and non-market mechanisms to mitigate climate change, is a crucial element of the Paris Agreement. Its operationalization was not yet completed at COP24 in Katowice and, hence, was at the center of this year's climate negotiations. Although, during the two weeks, the Parties' technical bodies worked hard at numerous versions of its implementation guidelines, no agreement could be found between government's representatives despite the 44 hours delay on the scheduled closing time of the negotiations. Our delegates followed technical negotiations on this, where Switzerland (between others) stood out for its position on setting ambitious targets and pushing for a human rights-based approach. Although it was disappointing to observe some Parties blocking on key issues such as environmental integrity and human rights, we welcomed the postponing of the decisions on Article 6 as better than the adoption of a crooked text.

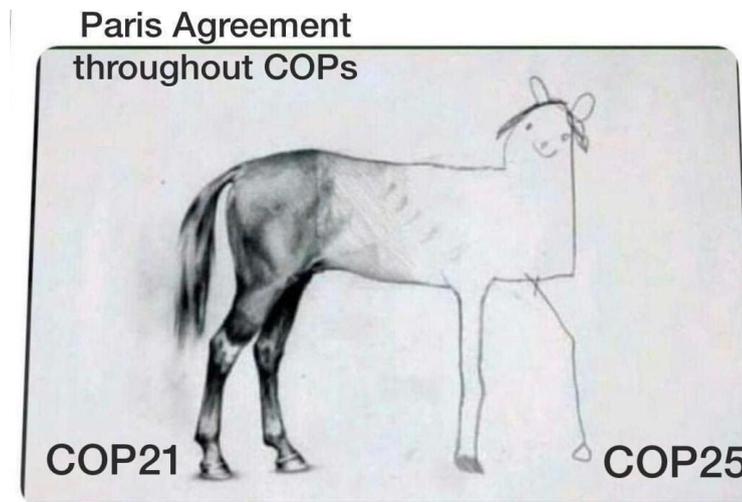
However, on other topics this COP achieved mild successes. On the Loss and Damage finances (the so-called WIM on Loss and Damage), an agreement was found, although no reference to adequate, new or additional funding was integrated and the call to scale up finance was weakened. Nonetheless, an expert group was established with the mandate of exploring financing opportunities inside/outside the UNFCCC and to “catalyze” technical assistance and implementation. In the final text on Warsaw International Mechanism, all reference to any developed country obligations on finance were removed and the discussion on long term finance was postponed to COP26.

A more solid success was the adoption of the Gender Action Plan, a plan to mainstream gender perspectives into climate policies and to integrate women in an equal and meaningful way in the UNFCCC process. The text adoption was great news especially because of its references to the climate finance outcomes, to women human rights, indigenous peoples, just transitions and gender responsive climate technologies.

In previous COPs developing countries made it clear that adaptation was a prominent issue to address in the Paris Agreement, yet some felt that during COP25 the conversation on adaptation made a step back rather than forwards. Although this should not have been a contentious topic in the negotiations, the inclusion in the texts of a reference to IPCC special land use report was controversial due to the opposition of Brazil, claiming sovereignty on Amazonia and attempting to block negotiations.

Much more happened on the side, on issues such as transparency and NDC revisions. For a deeper analysis, check out this outstanding analysis by the Perspectives Climate Group:

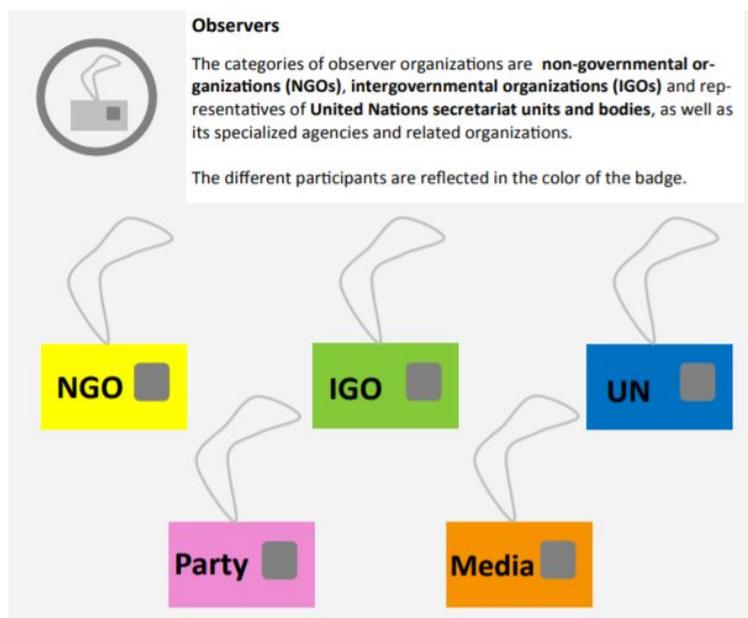
https://www.perspectives.cc/fileadmin/Publications/ECBI_COP25_Key_Outcomes.pdf



ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AT COP25

Although COPs are conceived as occasions for worldwide national governments to meet and agree on an international climate policies, since their start they always have allowed non-governmental organizations, other UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and media to participate as observers. We as SYFC are attending COPs in the role of civil society members. *But how are observers engaging at COPs?*

SYFC engages in activities from the constituency of the youth NGOs (YOUNGO) and from the Climate Action Network, the biggest international network of climate action NGOs, where SYFC is a member of.



Youth engagement - COY and YOUNGO

Since 2005, ahead of COP11 in Montreal, young people meet before COPs during the so called “Conference of Youth” (**COY**) in order to get prepared for the coming weeks, to meet and exchange experiences with the peers and to highlight the importance of including the youth voice in the climate change debates.

Moreover, since 2009, UNFCCC recognized young people taking part in UNFCCC processes as an official observer constituency, considering them as legitimate representatives of the voice and the interests of children and youth of the world. This new constituency is known as **YOUNGO**². As a youth NGO, SYFC is a member of this constituency.

YOUNGO mainly functions through working groups, where youth up to the age of 35 can work on defined topics, such as finance, agriculture, oceans, mitigation, adaptation, gender, and many more. There are 3 underlying operational working groups, one of actions, one on communications and one on policies. Furthermore there is a group of experienced YOUNGO members in the Bottom Lining Team who are supporting the two Focal Points, liaising with the UNFCCC and UN and YOUNGO. Since this year, our vice-president Marie-Claire has been elected as Focal Point of YOUNGO, thus engaging both for Swiss and international youth.

Youth at COPs mainly follow what is happening during the conference, in order to be able to prepare statements to express young people’s position concerning the negotiated topics in front of the other constituencies and the negotiators (during the plenary sessions).

COY is the general assembly of YOUNGO, which has been increasing in size over the years, reuniting more and more youth from different sectors and regions (peaking at COY11, which took place before COP21, where 4’000 young people participated).

This year’s COY was the 15th edition, which, because of the last-minute changes, was co-organized by the Chilean and Spanish youth.

During the three days ahead of COP25, young people from around the world had the opportunity to attend seminars and lectures about COP related topics and to get to know and select which working group to join.



NGO engagement - CAN

CAN is a worldwide network of over 1300 NGOs (including SYFC) in more than 120 countries, working to promote governments’ and individual’s action to limit

² More information can be found in the following links:

<https://conference-of-youth.org/fr/a-propos-de-coy/>; <https://www.coy15.org/home>

human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels³.

CAN members work to achieve this goal through information exchange and the coordinated development of NGO strategy on international, regional, and national climate issues. CAN has regional network hubs that coordinate these efforts around the world.

At COPs, CAN presents a similar functioning to YOUNGO, organizing daily meetings in order to coordinate and exchange information between NGOs and by forming working groups in order to target specific topics of interest.

Moreover, CAN acts a lot through lobbying, organizing meeting with negotiators and party members trying to convince them to enhance their ambitions.

In order to keep everybody informed on what is happening during the negotiations and in the climate change movement, CAN organizes the “ECO newsletter”, which is published on a recurring basis throughout the year and on each day during UNFCCC negotiations.

Another important form of engagement organized by CAN is the *Fossil of the day*, an event that takes place daily, attracting a lot of people around COP. The event daily rewards the countries that demonstrated the worst performance during the negotiations and through their actions back in their country. Examples of “climate losers” nominated at COP25 were the U.S., which created a lot of troubles by repeatedly blocking the negotiations, Canada, by supporting oil pipelines that create strong impacts on the environment and local communities, and Brazil, because, since Bolsonaro’s government, many environmental policies were shut down provoking increasing deforestation, land invasions and murder of indigenous people.



Luckily, some days (but not really often) CAN could also nominate climate leaders, awarding the *Ray of the day* to countries or groups that demonstrated outstanding environmental leadership and climate action. Examples were the youth and the indigenous people, for bringing forward a continuous fight for their future during the last year, the Norwegians, for campaigning to denounce fossil fuel extraction in the Arctic, and Switzerland (together with other countries) for insisting on including human rights in provisions of Article 6.

Lack of civil society’s inclusion and the activism response

Even if the channels for engagement of civil society exist, it is hard for groups, such as ethnic minorities and indigenous people, women, and youth, which are

³ For more information: <http://www.climatenetwork.org/about/about-can>

underrepresented in governments to meaningfully influence the negotiations processes.

For this reason, during COP25 frustration grew amongst people, which felt that a lot was promised but in reality demands were not really considered (the latter was demonstrated by the lack of progress and ambition in the negotiations).

This year, with the participation to COP25 of Fridays for future, climate activism was given a new relevance within COPs, also thanks to the public attention that climate strikes received in the past year. A significant example of the instrumentalization of the new popularity gained by climate strikers was the “normalization” of illegal actions within COP. On Wednesday during the second week, a group of Fridays For Future and indigenous rights activists conquered the stage of the main plenary, on which Greta Thunberg just took the word, to protest under the motto of “We are watching you”.

In general, this kind of actions needs to have a permission by the UNFCCC, which was not the case for the example above. Yet, protected by numerous cameras pointing at them, the action was tolerated and the UNFCCC’s instagram account even shared a picture of what was happening commenting “Special #COP25 event on the #ClimateEmergency”.

The subtle threshold of tolerance for illegal climate demonstrations was shown later the same day, when a few hundred civil society observers - of which the majority were young and indigenous people - initiated a new demonstration. The group started peacefully protesting within the halls of COP, not to block negotiations, but to try to advance them. Protesters aimed at highlighting the lack of accountability of rich countries, and at showing solidarity with the indigenous people, who are particularly vulnerable to climate change and poorly integrated in formal political processes. Despite the peaceful traits of the unauthorized demonstration, the protesters were first forcefully pushed out of the pavilion, then access to the venue was denied to all protesters for the rest of the day. The protesters were hence left out in the cold for hours without their belongings. The reaction was disproportionate and is a good example to underline the existing distance that could be felt and observed at COP25 between the demands of the people and the political action.

OUR EXPERIENCE AS SYFC

As member of CAN and YOUNGO, SYFC has the chance every year to participate at COPs with a small delegation. Due to the limited amount of badges available, and in order to give the opportunity to as many people as possible to take part to the conference, two different groups participate in the first, respectively second week of COP.



Our first week's delegation in Madrid, from left to right: Noemi Matzner, Simon Dalcher, Yannic Bucher, Patrick Senn, Marie-Claire Graf (part of the official Swiss delegation), David Dao.



Second week's delegation from left to right: Martina Rapp, Dario Siegen, Veronica Bozzini, Nicoletta Brazzola.

Our role at COP25

Many different negotiations, side events and conferences are taking place simultaneously in the halls and pavillion of the COP, following all of them is a mission impossible. Therefore it is important to choose a topic to focus on or a goal to achieve during the week, in order not to get lost in the overwhelming and confusing space of COP. We decided to split our delegation in two different topics. Part of us followed the negotiations on market mechanisms, which was the most relevant topic

of this COP, and were responsible to update our social channels on the progress of the discussions. The second part of the delegation joined a working group of YOUNGO and actively worked on the topic of Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE).

Action for Climate Empowerment

ACE is a term introduced by the UNFCCC that refers to actions that aim to address the issue of climate change by focusing on six priority areas: education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation on these issues. These elements are necessary to empower the public to take action against the climate crisis. Its importance was established in 1992 through article 6 of the UNFCCC. It is also included in the Paris Agreement through Article 12. Currently, the actions of ACE are further defined in the Doha Work Programme (DWP). The DWP was established in 2012 and therefore dates back to before the Paris Agreement. Since it runs out in 2020, this is a chance to push for a new, more ambitious successor program that also takes into account new development such as the emergence of fake news or the strong youth movements that took the streets in the last year. To coordinate and implement ACE on a national level as well as collaborate across borders, every party should appoint an ACE National Focal Point (NFP). So far only 108 parties have appointed an ACE National Focal Point and many of them don't have enough time or resources to do so. Our Vice President Marie-Claire Graf was appointed to follow this topic in the name of the Swiss government. This helped the SYFC delegation to be regularly updated from her on the status of the discussions about ACE at COP.

The main work of the YOUNGO ACE working group within the first week was to identify the key points of improvements for ACE. The points were written down in consensus of the whole group and presented during a meeting with ACE NFP of 35 parties. To draw attention to the work of YOUNGO and the closed ACE NFP meeting, many ACE NFPs were contacted bilaterally. The meeting showed that the NFPs would be happy to work closer with youth and further meetings and bilateral talks should be organized.

Even though COP is over, the work of the group will continue throughout the year, to make sure that such an important topic as educating and raising awareness will be considered seriously and that youth will be included in the decision making process.

Besides the above activities, the SYFC delegation had the chance to participate to interesting side events, bilaterals and take part to several actions. In the following section some of the highlights and thoughts of the second week of COP are presented.

Bilaterals

The SYFC delegation had the chance to have several bilaterals with delegations, directors of different programs under UNFCCC, politicians and other youth.

Thanks to YOUNGO, our delegation could meet the UN General Assembly President Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, to whom many young people could ask questions about United Nation and current negotiations.



High Level Event on ACE

The event has been attended by many politicians and other personalities, such as John Kerry, former secretary of the United States, Lorenzo Fioramonti, Minister of education of Italy, Ms. María Isabel Celaá Diéguez, Minister of Education of Spain and Ms. Mary Goretti Kitutu, Minister of Water and Environment of Uganda. At the beginning of the event, some youth representative were invited to the stage, and gave speeches on how education and raising awareness is key to solve climate change and requesting the need of more action. From our perspective, the young participants were not included enough in the event, for example, they were not invited to participate to the round table with Ministers after the first round of introduction. The feeling was that youth were invited more for an image purpose than for a real willingness to listen to them. The event has been unfortunately a long discussion without any concrete plan or very valuable content.

Swiss delegation meeting

On Wednesday, all Swiss civil society members, which included people from the economic sector, NGOs and Fridays for Future, were invited to an exchange and discussion with the federal Swiss delegation.



It was an extremely interesting opportunity to hear the Swiss position on the ongoing negotiations and to ask them questions. For example they explained that Switzerland and other countries were firmly opposing to the countries that were pushing to leave human rights out of Article 6. Moreover, they explained that Switzerland preferred not to have an agreement on Article 6 (and to postpone it to next year) rather than having a bad agreement.

Side events

Some of our members had the opportunity to take part in two events, one with climate activists Greta Thunberg and Luisa Neubauer and another one by Al Gore. During these conferences, really interesting facts and inspirational speeches were shared.

Al Gore exposed important facts about the technological transition, subsidies on fossil fuels (still higher than those for renewable energy), very strong images on the extreme weather events caused by climate change and their consequence for people and animals. The two-hours speech was, as usual in the Al Gore style, very powerful and full of emotions.

"We have renewable energy solutions available and they are cheaper than fossil fuels, they make sense, they make the water and the air clean! It is criminal and absurd to continue burning fossil fuel." [Al Gore]

European Union meeting

As part of CAN Europe, SYFC delegates had the honor to meet the Vice-president of the European Commission (Frans Timmermans) on Tuesday and ask him questions concerning the Green New Deal and the European position in the negotiations. Timmermans reassured the environmental NGOs that the EU would not agree on a Article 6 text that does not safeguard human rights and environmental integrity. He acknowledged the concerns of the Network regarding the timeline of the Green New Deal and explained that eventual delays would only occur in case more impact assessment were needed to enhance the EU climate ambitions.

A peculiar afternoon

During the entire duration of COP25 the SYFC's delegation felt a lot of frustration because of the lack of progresses and ambitious in the negotiations.

As already mentioned, during the afternoon of Wednesday, a peaceful protest, though unauthorized, has been organized inside plenary hall. We decided to take part to the action, considering the very few and weak progresses of the negotiations. Being part of this protest, together with people that are already suffering a lot from the effects of climate change, such as indigenous populations, and expressing their solidarity, has been a very emotional moment for us.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From a personal point of view, the chance to participate to the COP has been a very good opportunity to learn about the functioning of UNFCCC processes, to network with people that share the same concerns on climate change, and to follow closely the progress (or non-progress) of the negotiations.

As a consequence of the youth mobilization all over the world of the last year and the attention that the media gave to the issue of climate change, the expectation was that at this year's COP we would have seen some relevant progresses. This hasn't been the case. One more time, some parties showed their unwillingness to act to fight climate change, by blocking very crucial negotiations. Furthermore, we noticed a lot of hypocrisy in many discussions and events at COP: politicians and representatives of the public and private sector wanted to show how committed their institutions or companies are, however our feeling has been often that the commitment is limited to words and not reflected in real facts.

We thought to share with you this image of the COP25 sign, after 48h delay on the closing of the negotiations, which is, in our opinion, a good representation of the outcomes of these two weeks:



Upset by the lack of real climate action and political will, one question came to our mind: is this the way and the place where solutions to fight climate change will be found?

We will leave this question open for now.

After the closure of 2019 on the note of the disappointing outcomes of COP25, 2020 opened with a great prominence of climate change on the worldwide's newspaper. In 2020, the Paris Agreement will need to be finalized before the end of COP26 so to be fit for purpose, while the European Green New Deal will see the light. Almost as a reminder of the importance of taking climate action from the beginning of this decade, in the first days of 2020 Australia experienced the most devastating bushfires ever recorded while Indonesia was drowning under pitiless floods.

Nonetheless, Australia's government kept on repeating that climate change was not to be blamed for the bushfires and Siemens decided to go on with the Adani coal project in Australia, one of the biggest of its type in the world and a huge future source of carbon dioxide emissions. On the Swiss side, 2020 started with more hope. A huge step for the climate was the court's decision of acquitting climate activists protesting Credit Suisse for its massive investment in fossil fuels. This signaled to the world that climate change is a global emergency that requires unprecedented actions. We are hence hopeful that, thanks to the global mobilization of climate activists and to the good examples set by few countries, governments all over the World will start raising ambitions as soon as possible, enhancing their NDCs and agreeing on more ambitions under the Paris Agreement. We still need to be hopeful, because it is still feasible to reduce the emissions in order to stay below the threshold of +1.5°C if efforts are undertaken globally and if each of us does his or her part.

Acknowledgements

This incredible experience would have been impossible without the support of many generous people. The whole team of Swiss Youth for Climate cares therefore in thanking every and each of you.

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