ITALIAN YOUTH DECLARATION on INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY

SUMMARY FOR POLICYMAKERS
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INTRODUCTION

The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), published between 2013 and 2014, confirmed in a clear and definite way what we had already know since many years: climate change is unequivocal, and we only have little more than a decade to reverse the trend by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, in order to ensure that the average increase of global temperature by the end of the century does not exceed 2°C.

The effects of climate change are already evident, but it is clear that the major consequences will burden future generations; if we fail to reduce our emissions, the temperature increase in 2100 could exceed 4 °C, passing on our descendants a planet on the brink of unsustainability for most of our species.

This would result in a failure to comply with the principle of Intergenerational Equity, which states that the Planet should not be handed to future generations in worse conditions than those in which it was inherited; this means the right of future generations to use the same type of resources and ecological services current generations can benefit from today. But how to make sure that this principle is put into concrete effect?

The issue was brought back to discussion during COP19, the Nineteenth Conference of the Parties (COP) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), by young members of YOUNGO, the constituency that includes and represents climate youth associations and movements in the World at these summits. After creating a specific working group, the “Intergenerational Equity Working Group”, young activists firstly carried out a phase of research and then started writing policy documents, designed to engage politicians and negotiators on the theme of Intergenerational Equity. In Warsaw, the Working Group on Intergenerational Equity set up a massive campaign of elaboration and divulgation, culminated in the release of the Warsaw Declaration on Intergenerational Equity, which called upon Parties to recognise such principle and to act collectively in accordance with their obligations towards future generations. The Declaration was eventually signed by over 50 Nations attending the negotiations: because of this achievement, and thanks to the support of leading figures such as Ahmad Alhendawi (Special Envoy on Youth of the UN Secretary General), during the last day of the conference the expression “future generations” was included in the preamble of the final ADP text.
During COP20 in Lima, the second phase of the project has started: the submission of proposals on how to implement the principle, once it has been inserted in the text. The Italian Think Tank on Intergenerational Equity is framed in such a context. In fact, the purpose of the papers here presented by participants, both individuals and associations, is to identify good practices, previous successful initiatives and opportunities to make the principle concrete in various fields. The *Italian Youth Declaration on Intergenerational Equity*, which summarizes these researches and final proposals drawn up by Italian youth, was finally forwarded to the Intergenerational Equity Working Group in order to provide valid inputs to build on text proposals during 2015, leading up to Paris COP21.


**Proposals**

- Raising the principle of Intergenerational Equity to real human right, which would outweigh other rights in case of disputes;
- Including the Protection of the Environment for future generations in Constitutions texts, as already done by some Countries;
- Establishing an International Court of Justice appointed to punish violations of the right to Intergenerational Equity and to indicate possible measures to ensure that future generations can fully enjoy and benefit from natural resources.

**INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY: FROM PRINCIPLE TO RIGHT**

Nowadays, existing laws are limited to a generic recognition of environmental protection referred to living human beings and not to future generations; on that basis, it is clear that we need to make the mere principle of Intergenerational Equity become a legal right. In this sense, the problem of defining and representing future generations arises: first, we could talk not about future generations, but about Humanity as a whole, including present and future members, giving legal status to this group of individuals.

However, even accepting the theory that future generations only involve unborn people, it would still be possible to attribute legal personality to the latter: under the Italian Law for example, it is possible to conclude contracts for future goods, and unborn child is granted a set of privileges that form the so-called “prenatal personality”, so that it is possible that unborn have legal personality (in this case their parents can legally represent them at Court).

Further developing this reflection, certain categories of people, such as associations or groups of individuals, could represent future generations at trial, as holders of same interests. This is what was admitted by the Supreme Court of the Philippines in the case “Minors Oposa v.
Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources”, in 1993. Following the claim of 35 children, represented by their parents, the Court declared that the plaintiffs represented future generations and that “the minors’ assertion of their right to a sound Environment constitutes, at the same time, the performance of their obligation to ensure the protection of that right for the generations to come”.

THE COURT OF INTERGENERATION JUSTICE

The recognition of Intergenerational Equity as human right would entail the need to establish a special authority deputed to prevent any threat to future generations’ rights: a Court of Intergenerational Justice, which should evaluate acts performed in the present and which could potentially injure future generations’ rights. At the same time it would dictate the possible guidelines to avoid these negative effects in the long term. In order to make the protection of future generations’ rights be real, mandatory standards, and not only mere principles, are needed; the solution could be found within International Law, able to influence domestic Law, but also open to impulses from the latter. First, multilateral binding agreements would be necessary, as they would provide detailed and stringent rules as well as an effective sanction mechanism. In this way we could ensure compliance with such agreements both internationally and nationally: through the creation of a Court on the model of the European Court of Human Rights, both States and individuals could have access to it, while also domestic Courts would be competent, thanks to the incorporation of treaties into national Law.

INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY IN THE CONSTITUTIONS

A further possibility would be the inclusion of the protection of future generations into national Constitutions. So far, only three States have adopted a similar approach: Ecuador, the Dominican Republic and, in January 2014, Tunisia, which, in Article 45, obliges the State to "guarantee the right to an Environment and a sustainable Environment" and to "put in place the necessary measures to eliminate environmental pollution," adding in the preamble "the need to contribute to a safe climate and environmental protection."

Basically, this would allow a Country to sue another one for negligence in combating climate change, and would also "allow bodies such as the International Court of Justice to intervene in case of complaints by a State against another one that is causing damage because it is not implementing policies to reduce their emissions,” as the Canadian expert David Estrin says.
GOVERNANCE

Author:
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Proposals
- Promoting the spread of decentralized cooperation, which, basing its strength on the close relationship between Society and Territory, promotes the development of local and trans-local strategies related to sustainable development and environmental protection;
- Applying decentralized cooperation on different areas of intervention related to it: co-decision and co-development, endogenous development, capacity-building, dialogue processes and decentralization, mobilization of excellences, creation of a grid of development indicators.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Decentralized cooperation, having a crucial role for the connection between different levels of action and of institutional interaction, develops decision-making processes both vertically and horizontally (i.e. respectively, between stakeholders themselves and between them and members of Institutions).

This type of cooperation can be defined as one of the areas which are potentially the most favorable to develop local strategies and to promote trans-local sustainable development, as it builds its own strengths and innovative capacity on the close relationship between Society and Territory. Through the mobilization of certain resources and actors (according to the principle of Intergenerational Equity), it plays an important role in reducing both social and environmental vulnerability and in contributing to an overall improvement of the quality of life.

The system, as a whole, can be divided into some areas of analysis and application, each of which can lead to the translation of the principle of Equity into a detailed environmental public policy:
• the area of co-decision/co-development, which describes the political dialogue between partners of the territories involved and the common definition of the objectives;
• the area of endogenous development, where it is possible to set initiatives and strategies which fit the specific vocations of the territories involved;
• the area of "capacity building" and therefore the development of technical, financial, managerial and institutional competencies of actors involved;
• the strengthening of participation in democratic life and the process of technical dialogue, in a coordinated and symmetric way, trying to promote decentralization processes that respond to greater effectiveness for sustainable development;
• the support and mobilization of eco-friendly technological innovations.
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As it has been debated in the previous sections, when talking about Intergenerational Equity, a major problem is the representation of future generations, with practical difficulties in identifying which individuals can defend their rights. Besides the legal proposals which have already been submitted, a further solution to this obstacle could be the development of a program of youth delegates by States, following the models which already exist in Australia, Germany, Norway, Finland, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland and Thailand. To mention a relevant example, the results of youth delegates’ activity during the Conference of Parties, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, were extremely positive: during the COP19 in Warsaw, in particular, the collaboration between some official youth delegates and other youth representatives of NGOs and academic institutions led to a proposal which was drafted and sent in order to recognize the protection of future generations. Eventually, the expression "future generations", welcomed by Parties, was included in the preamble of the final text of the ADP (Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban platform for Enhanced Action), that deals with the definition of a new global agreement to reduce emissions and which from 2020 should replace the Kyoto Protocol.

A memorable achievement, which would have never occurred without the aid of official youth delegates, who were able to talk without hesitation with their "senior" delegates as they were legitimised by the awareness of not only speaking on their own behalf, but on behalf of all those who will inhabit this Planet in the future.
EDUCATION

Author:
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Proposal

- Including in school curricula, in all orders and at all levels, a formative discipline that deals with issues concerning the relationship between man and the Environment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Environmental education, in Italy as well as in several other Countries, has numerous shortcomings in terms of both quantity and quality: this affects significantly the environmental sensitivity of citizens, who often develop behaviors and lifestyles without proper awareness about Planet’s capacity and resources and of the potential consequences for future generations.

In order to demolish such cultural barriers, the goal must be to unify the concept of Intergenerational Equity and the issues about environmental sustainability related to it. The idea is to place in the school curriculum of all orders at all levels a subject that deals with issues related to the relationship between man and the Environment. The new subject should therefore be compulsory for all students of all school levels and of all types, as it is the study of their language, local culture and pure and applied sciences; there should be weekly lessons, students should be evaluated periodically and teachers should use teaching tools such as LIMs, interactive lessons, exhibits and EAS, so that students may learn more not only by attending lectures, but also by putting into practice inductive and deductive methods of the scientific approach.

According to school type and level, students should be helped understand the centrality of environmental issues in various sectors and disciplines: materials science (Engineering, Architecture), health sciences (Medicine, Chemistry, Nutrition), earth sciences (Geography, Geology, Ecology), biological sciences (Biology, Botany, Environmental Science, Genetics, Forestry), social sciences (Psychology, Education, Anthropology, Sociology). And there is no
doubt that environmental sustainability is a cross-cutting issue, which opens wide spaces to interconnections between the various fields of knowledge and practices of everyday life. The new scholar subject should be the mean to make new generations aware of such close relationship: in this way it would be possible to find an area to fulfill Intergenerational Equity, so that this principle could be formalized by Governments and not just promoted by individuals.
ENERGY

Author:
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Proposal

• Coordinating and optimizing the global exploitation of renewable energy sources, protecting the areas which are more favorable to development through the establishment of “Energy Protected Designated zones”.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is necessary to take rapid and drastic decisions in order to rapidly comply the rhythms suggested by the IPCC to reach the target of climate change mitigation.

It is necessary to coordinate globally the exploitation of renewable energy sources, in order to maximize their spread and to reduce drastically the use of fossil fuels. An example is represented by what is being discussed at European level in terms of strengthening energy interconnection between Member States, which has seen a recent agreement on an initial target of at least 10%. Furthermore, the spread of storage systems would be necessary, both at small and large scale, in order to reduce the negative effects given by the whims of these sources. An interesting measure could be the protection of sites which are particularly suited to the exploitation of renewable energy sources, which, according to similar standards to those of natural parks, would receive protection due to their use, in order to limit their exploitation for the sole purpose of producing electric or thermal energy, and to contribute to climate change mitigation. These areas could be named "areas of designated protected energy."

The economic help able to support a strong decarbonization policy would occur primarily by taxation of the emitter plants, which has already been started by several States in the World, recently Chile.

These areas should be managed by supranational bodies that would invest with the sole purpose of reducing the overall impact of energy production through renewable sources. Part
of these areas should be dedicated to research and development of new technologies, free from market imperatives in the short term, in order to speed up the development of appropriate solutions to different geographical areas of the planet.

The only way to ensure Intergenerational Equity would be to hand future generations a world based on a sustainable energy system and which is safe, accessible and linked to horizontal structures.
AGRICULTURE

Author:
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Proposal

- Reducing, drastically, the ecological impact of large cities through the development of vertical farms, which would ensure sustainable cities for future generations, by making urban centres self-sufficient in food production and by recollecting and reusing solid and liquid waste

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The most important resources for humanity are undoubtedly water and food. Currently, both are managed in an unsustainable way, especially in industrialized Countries.

Intensive agriculture has several problems, such as very high use of drinkable water, which, after seepage, is no longer recoverable; furthermore, recent studies have shown the high polluting power these agricultural techniques entail due to massive use of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides.

Moreover, foodstuffs that are produced outside major urban centres are transported daily to towns with significant emissions of greenhouse gases.

In order to live in the future in line with the principle of Intergenerational Equity, it is essential to implement a conversion towards the model of Eco-City: a sustainable city, which can include outputs close to zero. Among the many functional processes to be involved, the most important would be food production. But how to make cities self-sufficient in terms of food? The answer is represented by vertical farms: a completely isolated building, dedicated to organic farming.

If vertical farms were able to spread and succeed, many improvements would be possible: to lighten the ever increasing cities’ daily demand for food; to decrease water consumption for food production (up to 95% through aeroponic techniques); to stop using fertilizers,
herbicides, pesticides; to increase urban and local agriculture; to produce organic and healthy food; to create new opportunities of sustainable employment; to produce more food from the same soil (up to 120 times more), to development in height; to reconstitute large natural areas which are now used for intensive agriculture; to reduce CO₂ emissions due to the daily transport of food, thanks to local production; to reuse urban liquid and solid waste and to create a network of fair trade groups operating at local level.
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