



François de Rugy,
Ministre d'Etat, Minister for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition

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Introductory speech



LUTTER CONTRE LES INÉGALITÉS
PAR LA PROTECTION DE LA BIODIVERSITÉ ET DU CLIMAT
FIGHTING INEQUALITIES
BY PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE
G7 ENVIRONNEMENT ENVIRONMENT | METZ 5 - 6 MAI 2019
5 - 6 MAY

Only the spoken word prevails

Ministers,

Mr Secretary-General of the OECD,

Executive Secretaries,

Mr Chairman of the IPBES, Ms Vice-Chair of the IPCC,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am thrilled to receive you here in Metz for the G7 Environment Ministers' Meeting.

The President of the Republic has decided to make the fight against inequalities the main priority of the French G7 Presidency. Certainly, humanity has largely benefited from the extension of the market economy since the end of the Cold War, globalization and even the technology revolution, which have helped many pull themselves out of poverty and improved the living conditions of hundreds of millions of people. The percentage of those living in extreme poverty has dropped from over 50% in the early 80s to less than 10% today.

To some extent, the international community has thus succeeded in reducing inequalities and together we have created a framework for continuing this, with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement for the climate.

But there is still work to be done. We have observed an increase in economic inequalities in nearly every country for which we have reliable statistics, industrialised or not.

Is it sustainable that 10% of the richest inhabitants of the planet accumulate 40% of global income and are responsible for 50% of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide? Especially when we know that by 2030, 100 million more people will be living in extreme poverty if we are not able to meet the commitments we have made for the climate.

Faced with this observation, the French Presidency plans to launch a “Framework of actions to fight inequalities” at the Biarritz Summit in August. It will comprise an agenda of solutions to combat inequalities – the fruit of the work done by various ministries. Our mission at this G7 Environment Meeting is thus to develop tangible solutions that will allow us to reduce inequalities of all kinds and preserve the environment at the same time.

What are the ties that bind inequalities and the environment?

It is true that more often than not, the environment is viewed as something that interests only the educated middle class from prosperous countries. Environmental policies are often criticised because they do not take those with the lowest of incomes well enough into account.

[The idea of environmental inequalities has, however, been around for a while now. It first emerged on the scene in the United States in the 80s with the development of movements for environmental justice. At the time, these movements involved local communities gathering to protest the twofold injustice related to pollution – how the main victims of pollution are generally those least responsible for it and are also the most economically disadvantaged.]

The environmental crises that we are experiencing now, be it climate change or what could be the planet's 6th biodiversity extinction crisis, are above all deep injustices for future generations. The thousands of young people that march for the climate worldwide are a perfect reminder of this.

These crises also go hand in hand with inequalities in access to natural and energy resources, exposure to pollution and the catastrophes it causes. Although damage to the environment does not have the same social impact around the world, it does indeed reveal and worsen social inequalities everywhere.

These inequalities, which do not only weaken social cohesion and drain people's trust in democratic institutions, are also obstacles facing the ecological transition. Nations, social groups and individuals will be ever-more likely to participate in joint actions if they esteem that tasks are allocated fairly, that measures are taken to reduce inequalities and that the most impoverished and the most vulnerable are not those most affected by the most serious consequences. A climate and environmental policy

that ignores these social effects would reveal itself to be both unfair and ineffective.

So, in the next two days, we will discuss every aspect of these inequalities. We will do this through the prism of action in favour of biodiversity and the climate, since climate change disproportionately affects the poorest and most vulnerable among us. And the poorest are also the most dependent on biodiversity, both in terms of income and insurance against risks.

Our four days of debates and all of our deliverables are organised around four priorities.

The first is centred on scientific alerts and the international action for biodiversity and the climate. We will use science, which plays a key role in alerting us, creating a consensus and provoking political involvement that is equal to the challenges we are facing.

Our first session, this morning, will thus be led by the three main environmental platforms: the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES); the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); and the International Resource Panel (IRP). I would especially like to thank Professor Watson, the Chairman of the IPBES, and Dr Larigauderie, its Executive Secretary, who made the effort to be here today, even though just yesterday they were still working on IPBES' 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, approved yesterday in Paris after a week of intense work.

By making use of this information, we can come to an agreement on the most effective ways to boost the space given to biodiversity on the international stage and to make ambitious measures possible during the COP15 Convention on Biological Diversity set to take place in China in 2020.

Once our discussions have come to a close on Monday, I will propose that we adopt a G7 Charter on biodiversity.

The climate will also be at the heart of our debates, as climate change is projected to be the main threat to biodiversity. Even if we suppose that every country implements their commitments to the climate, we would still be heading to over 3°C of global warming by the end of the century. This is why the key words of 2019 are “climate ambition”. We must be ever-more ambitious in the commitments we make to fill the gap between current efforts and those required in order to meet the temperature goals set in the Paris Agreement, and before 2020 if possible.

Our second priority is specifically dedicated to inequalities and the inclusive ecological transition. At lunch, we will study the ways and means needed to promote a fair ecological transition. We will pay specific attention to gender equality.

Our afternoon will deal with tangible solutions for biodiversity and the climate. At that time, I will

invite you to make concrete commitments in favour of solutions based on nature and that combat the major threats to biodiversity, particularly deforestation, excessive exploitation and even plastic pollution.

Lastly, tomorrow morning, we will come to our last priority – we will lay the groundwork for the emergence of biodiversity finance, just like climate finance. We all know that an agreement, ambitious as it may be, at the COP15 Convention on Biological Diversity will remain just that – a simple agreement – if economic players do not get on board. We must create conditions that will incite a massive redirection of financial flows in favour of biodiversity.

Our work will be based on two reports commissioned by the French G7 Presidency. The OECD will present its work on the economic benefit of biodiversity preservation, quantification of dedicated financial flows and the measurability of different pressures on biodiversity. WWF, together with AXA, has produced a report on how to integrate biodiversity risks in investment decisions.

To conclude, I would like to highlight two new elements that we wanted to present at this G7 Environment Meeting.

First of all, openness:

The openness shown by many countries outside of the G7, whom I would like to thank for their presence here today and whom I would like to thank in advance for contributions they will make to our discussions and their commitments.

Openness to civil society. G7 Environment will take place in two neighbouring spaces: the ministerial plenary session at the Palais des Congrès and the civil society segment at the Centre Pompidou. The events at the Centre Pompidou are open to all and I would like to invite the official delegations to participate in them. Discussions with civil society will also take place at the Robert Schumann convention centre. We will hold a discussion with civil society representatives on Monday morning, who will have had the chance to finalise what they have to say thanks to the other events happening on that day.

Finally, tangible action. During these two days, tangible initiatives will be presented at each session. These initiatives aim to create or strengthen coalitions of players presenting effective solutions for biodiversity and the climate. You will be called on to decide on these initiatives. I hope that, on Monday night, we will be able to witness a collective commitment to resolute and tangible action, as a complement to the political commitments that we will make in the report and charter of this G7 on biodiversity.

Thank you for your attention and I hope that the two days of work ahead of us will be fruitful.

Only the spoken word prevails

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