

"Climate change adaptation, a lever for Europe's resilience and prosperity: preparing and leading the way"

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Climate Change Adaptation Brussels Declaration of European Non-State Actors

This Declaration was discussed and adopted at the Climate Chance Brussels Summit on 3–4 June 2026. It is supported by the signatory civil society organizations, economic stakeholders and networks of local and regional authorities. This major event was co-organized by Climate Chance, the Belgian Federal Minister for Climate and Environmental Transition, the Brussels-Capital Regional Government, the City of Brussels and the European Committee of the Regions. Without necessarily endorsing all the proposals contained in this Declaration, which remains under the responsibility of the signatory organizations, the co-organizers welcome the proposals put forward and commit to presenting them in the various forums for debate and development of the future European strategy.

On this occasion, Europe's non-state actors and territorial authorities reaffirm their determination to contribute actively to the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of European climate resilience policies, as leading partners of the European institutions and Member States.

Europe is **warming faster** than the global average. Heatwaves, floods, storms: climate hazards are multiplying, threatening our territories, economies, and ways of life. We now know that Europe will face a significant increase in temperatures during the 21st century. Based on current national commitments under the Paris Agreement, IPCC scientists estimate that global warming could reach around +3°C by the end of the century.

We stress the importance of not **separating adaptation from mitigation**. The multiplication of geopolitical tensions has highlighted Europe's vulnerability, particularly its dependence on fossil fuel imports. Strengthening policies aimed at phasing out carbon-intensive energy sources and accelerating electrification are major challenges for Europe's future and are necessary for its independence, economic prosperity, resilient and efficient infrastructure, and reduced carbon footprint. By demonstrating strong commitment in this area and delivering greenhouse gas emission reductions consistent with the Paris Agreement, Europe can maintain a leadership role in climate negotiations, while continuing to strive toward the objectives established at COP21.

The European Commission (2024–2029) has acknowledged that climate change represents a **systemic threat** to Europe’s economic, social, and environmental security. Given the increasing scale of extreme climate events, adaptation has become an immediate resilience challenge. **Only by embedding adaptation as a guiding principle from the outset of every policy, investment, infrastructure and building project, energy, food and health system, and more broadly every economic ecosystem, can prosperity, freedom, and democracy be safeguarded across the continent.**

This integration must rely on a set of precise indicators capable of measuring the reality and effectiveness of the actions undertaken.

We emphasize the urgent need to implement these policies, appropriately scaled to current scientific projections, while upholding the principles of social justice and gender equality. Adaptation and resilience policies must be built upon people-centred principles and action frameworks, strengthening cohesion and solidarity within European societies and taking into account the accumulation of inequalities that increases exposure and vulnerability to climate change. They must rely on indicators capable of measuring both the implementation and impact of policies, in line with international assessment frameworks adopted at the most recent COP. We also stress the need to address the specific needs of the most exposed territories (mountain regions, coastal areas, floodplains, etc.), which should benefit from dedicated plans and enhanced financial support.

To bridge the gap between risk awareness and action, the European Integrated Framework must be based on an operational and quantified adaptation plan; involve civil society stakeholders from the outset; rely on territorial plans aligned with a common reference pathway; and be supported by a robust and solidarity-based insurance system under a strengthened European framework.

*The new European Climate Resilience and Risk Management Integrated Framework, due to be presented in 2026, is a major milestone for which Climate Chance is mobilizing as an NGO dedicated to fostering mobilization and joint advocacy among non-state actors and territorial authorities. The complexity of the adaptation mechanisms to be implemented was at the heart of the previous Climate Chance Europe-Africa Summit held in Marseille in 2025. That summit enabled a collective reflection **involving local and regional authorities, businesses and economic sectors, insurers and reinsurers, think tanks, universities, NGOs and networks, citizens, and civil society organizations.** This major gathering contributed to a comprehensive submission to the future European Climate Resilience and Risk Management Integrated Framework, summarized in a document containing detailed proposals submitted to the European Commission in February 2026 as part of its public consultation process. At the Brussels Summit, these proposals were revisited in order to reaffirm priorities and mobilize stakeholders for implementation.*

Gathered in Brussels, the signatory networks therefore reaffirm our priorities so that the future *European Climate Resilience and Risk Management Framework* (scheduled for late 2026) will enable:

- **The adoption of a common European climate reference scenario**, based on a global warming trajectory of approximately +3°C. This would move beyond a “range of scenarios” approach and ensure a coherent and harmonized framework for risk assessment, adaptation planning, investment decisions, and infrastructure development at European, national, and territorial levels. This common trajectory

should serve as the baseline for public policies and investment decisions, while facilitating comparability of actions and progress achieved.

- **Anticipation rather than reaction**, through proactive climate risk planning, systematic integration of the European warming trajectory into public and private decision-making, responses to climate events following a “build back better” approach, and recognition of the increasingly recurrent nature of certain events.
- **Cross-sectoral integration and horizontal mainstreaming**, by applying the principle of *climate resilience by design* across all sectors (infrastructure, ecosystems, health, food systems, economy, energy systems, buildings) and at all levels of governance, from the European level to the local level, in order to address differentiated vulnerabilities.
- **Climate security for all European citizens**: preparedness must be holistic and shared to ensure the proper functioning of the Union under all circumstances. National climate risk assessments must be translated into locally adapted actions, bringing together efforts, providing every level of governance with the means to act within its competences, and making the protection of the most vulnerable populations a permanent priority.
- **The importance of resilient agricultural policies**, fully incorporating the unavoidable transformation of production conditions. European funding must support these transitions, ensure fair allocation of water resources alongside other territorial needs, prioritize local solutions, address gender and territorial inequalities, strengthen food autonomy, preserve and restore ecosystems and biodiversity.

To achieve these objectives, we recall several key imperatives:

1. **Reaffirm the importance of allocating resources from the Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034)** to territorial adaptation policies. Their renationalization risks depriving territories of both the capacity to act and the autonomy needed to design effective plans. **Cohesion and territorial support policies must under no circumstances become adjustment variables in relation to other European priorities, given their essential role in strengthening territorial resilience.** We also call for the maintenance and reinforcement of European programmes for research, experimentation, and the exchange of best practices.
2. **Build a culture of resilience** by informing and mobilizing European citizens, particularly young people, but also businesses and public authorities, and by integrating the recommendations of the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change (ESABCC).
3. **Systematically integrate analyses of systemic risks and cascading effects between sectors**, territories, and critical infrastructures in order to anticipate the indirect impacts of climate change on energy, food, health, economic, social, and environmental systems.
4. **Strengthen coordination by enhancing European platforms and tools for exchange, particularly those developed under the European Climate Resilience and Risk Management Integrated Framework**, to facilitate the sharing of data, best practices, and funding opportunities, while harmonizing methodologies for risk assessment and progress monitoring through the use of precise indicators across all relevant sectors.

5. **Maintain a strong pillar of international solidarity towards the most exposed territories (Small Island States, Southeast Asia, desert regions, etc.), and particularly towards Africa, as affirmed in the Marseille Declaration.** European investment in adaptation and resilience policies for the most vulnerable countries is essential to strengthening trust and building new alliances within the COP process, thereby increasing ambition on mitigation, since CO₂ emission reduction policies remain central adaptation policies as well.
6. **Support adaptation and resilience, in light of all the above objectives, as a competitiveness and security agenda.** Resilient infrastructure, reliable energy systems, and territories that are prepared and capable of addressing structural gender inequalities are prerequisites for investment, industrial continuity, and social cohesion.

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