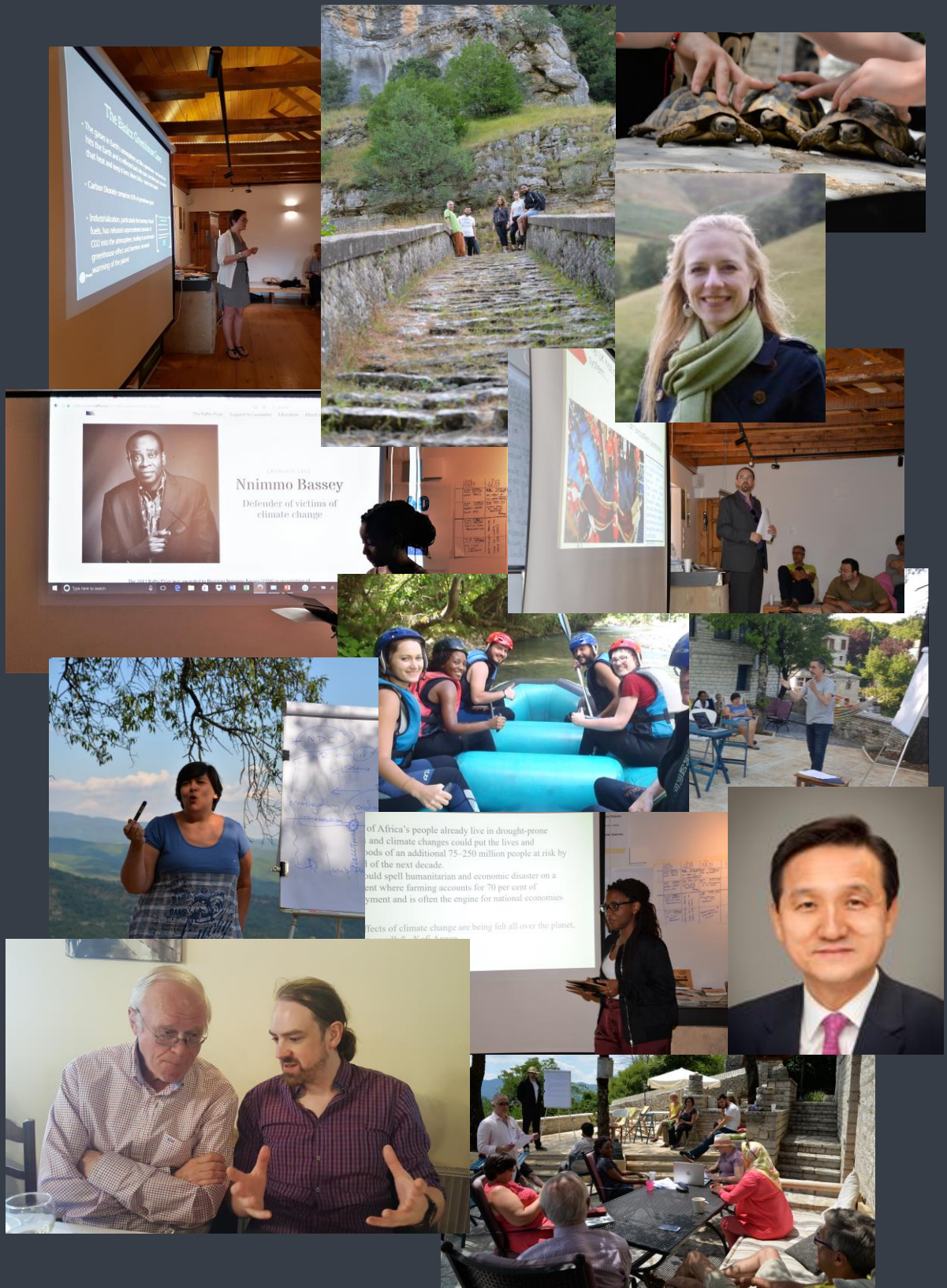


Mountain Seminar, Greece
International Environmental Laws and Climate Change:
Is There Global Climate Justice?
July 17-20, 2017
Summary Report and Outcome



Speakers' Presentations – Summaries

(Chronologically listed as they delivered)

Dr. Margaretha Wewerinke-Singh

"Towards Accountability for Human Rights Violations Associated with Climate Change"

The Paris Agreement has little to offer victims of climate change, and international institutions are failing to deliver climate justice. We need to identify and create a rights-based or otherwise equivalent approach to redress climate change.

Kelci Wilford

"What Climate Change? What We Did to the Planet, What We Need to do Now, and What Happens If We Don't"

Action is urgently needed.

Wouter Veening (Keynote Speech)

"Justice in a Climate-Stressed World: The Role of International Institutions"

Climate change leads to uncompromising and dangerous zero-sum situations, as evidenced by many strong examples, and will potentially lead to profound insecurity and war if institutions are not in place and equipped to prevent this global problem.

Nnimmo Bassey

"Climate Action from Below"

Financial resources (globally) must be diverted away from dangerous or unhelpful ends such as continued nuclear (arms) development, & channeled towards crucial developing countries' needs – the most affected by climate change.

Ambassador Son Sung-hwan

"GCF and Climate Finance"

Effective and targeted climate finance can empower the countries most burdened by climate change to take ownership in adaptation and sustainable development.

Dr. Thomas Muinzer

"A 'World's First' in Climate Law: A Case Study of the UK's Climate Change Act 2008"

In passing the first rigorous climate change legislation, the UK provided the world with a crucial opportunity to learn from its successes and failures – not least given its complex constitutional environment.

Dr. Maria Gavouneli

"The Paris Agreement: Mechanisms for Implementation"

Given the challenges posed by the international legal structure and the lessons learned in the recent past, the Paris Agreement has generated a complex but relatively familiar framework that States can work within in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and undertake joint actions in mitigation and adaptation from the immediate impacts of climate change, which likely bodes well for the future.

Dr. Alexandros Yannis

The global energy transition away from fossil-fuels and towards clean and sustainable energy, which is accelerating under the Paris Agreement, is a key aspect in the effort to fight climate change, and technological breakthroughs in this direction are important catalysts

Petrina Bireije

"Climate Change and its Effect on the African Population"

In highlighting the desperate consequences of climate change in Africa in particular, one sees how states bearing the brunt of climate change consequences require greatly more resource support to assist in adaptation (and mitigation).

Christos Bezirtzoglou

We must use technology for communicating education and the need for education through technology to deal with these problems.

Dr. Shahr-Yar Sharei

"Do Global Citizens Have Environmental Rights? The Legality and The Universality"

The environment must be recognized and promoted as a fundamental right internationally, not merely domestically. This can be achieved through a legally binding global framework.

Dr. Nikos Yannis

"Climate Justice-The Federalist Perspective"

A federalist-style structural arrangement that places a significant onus on localized action, not merely vertical hierarchical governance, can help us attend properly to the challenge of climate change.

Proposals/Suggestions

UN Empowerment and Democratization

Recognition of individual rights at UN level, not merely states – a parliamentary assembly could aid in recognition of environmental rights (one suggestion of many)

Unifying theme: a desire to see an explicitly developed/recognized right to environment at the UN (global) level (which could be "constitutional" in nature)

Outcome Document

The participants discussed various aspects of the issue of climate justice. Below are some of the ideas and suggestions discussed:

The Problem

Climate change is very real and we are approaching the point of no return. Therefore, action to address the adverse effects of global warming is urgently needed. In addition to the strong scientific evidence of serious and possibly irreversible environmental damage caused by anthropogenic climate change, the human impacts are also devastating. Climate change leads to uncompromising and dangerous zero-sum situations, as evidenced by many strong examples, and will potentially lead to profound insecurity and war if institutions are not in place and equipped to prevent this global problem. The burden of climate change is not distributed evenly - particularly in Africa and parts of Asia, which require greatly more resources in order to adapt to, and mitigate, the effects of climate change.

A Rights-Based Approach

International Human Rights Law has the potential to provide solutions for victims of climate change, but the framework must be strengthened. We need to identify and create a rights-based and legally-binding approach to redress climate change. Additionally, and related to this, the environment must be recognized as a fundamental right – not merely domestically, but also universally.

The Roles of Finance and Technology

Effective and targeted climate finance can empower the countries most burdened by climate change to take ownership in adaptation and sustainable development. To support these efforts, global financial resources must be diverted away from dangerous or unhelpful ends such as continued nuclear arms developments, and channeled towards the crucial needs of developing countries.

Energy transition is a key aspect of fighting climate change. The merging of the energy sector and climate change as an issue is a cause for optimism in that area of governance, as is the advancement of new technologies that can help to move us away from reliance on fossil fuels. Technology is also vital for promoting and continuing education to deal with climate change.

The Role of the State

Given the challenges posed by the international legal structure and the lessons learned in the recent past, the Paris Agreement has generated a complex but relatively familiar framework that States can work within in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions together, which likely bodes well for the future.

Domestically, in passing the first rigorous climate change legislation in 2008, the UK has provided the world with a crucial opportunity to learn from its successes and failures – not least given its complex constitutional environment. The 2008 Climate Change Act is a useful model for how other States can implement legally binding targets to combat climate change.

Overall, a federalist-style structural arrangement that places a significant onus on localized action, not merely vertical hierarchical governance, can help us attend properly to the challenge of climate change.

Proposals and Suggestions

One unifying theme from our discussions on how to achieve climate justice was a strong desire amongst most expert participants to see an explicitly developed and recognized right to environment at the international level. Such a right could be actualized by the United Nations, and this may be best achieved through the empowerment and democratization of the UN and recognition of individual, not just State, rights. One suggestion, for example, was that a parliamentary assembly at the UN could aid in the recognition of environmental rights and governance of climate justice.

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