



Press Release

The Cyprus Institute Conference on Climate Change: Enthusiastic International Response

On the 18th and 19th May 2018, The Cyprus Institute (www.cyi.ac.cy) hosted the International Conference “**Climate Change in the Mediterranean and the Middle East: Challenges and Solutions**” (www.climatechange2018.org). The event was organised under the Aegis of the President of the Republic of Cyprus, H.E. Mr. **Nicos Anastasiades**, and with the support of the European Commission Representation in Cyprus.

The conference was attended by more than 300 delegates from 35 countries, including leading international scientific and political personalities, such as **Laurent Fabius** (former Prime Minister of France, who presided over the success of the COP21 Paris Agreement), Prof. **Jeffrey Sachs** (Director of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network - SDSN), Prof. **Petteri Taalas** (Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organisation), **Lassina Zerbo**, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), **Christos Stylianides** (EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management), and many others. The event has received significant media coverage by local and international news organisations.

At the conference, the latest scientific data and projections were presented in order to enable their further development, and their impacts on health, agriculture, economy and stability in the region were discussed. Climate change is evolving into the new major threat for the Middle East and North Africa, and all countries in the Eastern Mediterranean are considered to be particularly vulnerable. All the speakers stressed that now is the time to take immediate action. Based on scientific considerations, suggestions were submitted on how to address the forthcoming crisis and its consequences.

In his address, **Mr. Laurent Fabius** criticized the decision by US President Donald Trump to withdraw from the Paris accord on climate. He announced a new international initiative aimed at consolidating, through a treaty with legal force, fundamental environmental principles that will apply to all countries. The initiative, the Global Pact for the Environment, has the warm support of French President Emmanuel Macron and is expected to be completed over the next two to three years. Speaking about the conference, Mr. Fabius noted that *“the high-level and stimulating program of this two-day conference, and the outstanding participants, underline the dynamism of The Cyprus Institute, which has become a key research and education institution, especially on climate and environmental issues.”*

The Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, **Petteri Taalas**, pointed out that environmental problems have social and political consequences, and serve to reinforce crises that exist in different countries. Phenomena such as the Arab Spring, migration, and even the rise of populism in Europe are linked to the socio-political consequences of climate change.

The EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, **Christos Stylianides**, called climate change as the biggest challenge that mankind and the planet are facing today, and announced the RescEU program as Europe’s immediate and collective response to the ever-increasing number of natural disasters, related to climate change.



Prof. **Jeffrey Sachs** highlighted the international importance of the conference given both the vulnerability of the Eastern Mediterranean – Middle East (MENA) region and its significance in international affairs. He proposed that The Cyprus Institute, in close cooperation with the Government of Cyprus, take the lead in developing a common set of actions to connect the region, including massive renewable energy generation and transmission.

In a written statement to the conference participants, former Greek Prime Minister **George Papandreou** underlined that *“At some point humanity, and we in the region, will understand how secondary our feuds are as we face the sure destruction of our civilizations as we know them because of the effects of climate change.”*

The President of The Cyprus Institute, Prof. **Costas Papanicolas**, said that the success of the conference is largely due to the fact that Cyprus, with its strategic location and good relations with all the countries in the region, is the most suitable place for cooperation between the MENA countries. He also announced that The Cyprus Institute will proceed with the establishment of a local SDSN chapter in Cyprus that will operate as a regional hub, in addition to The Cyprus Institute already serving as the “Future Earth” MENA Regional Center (FEMRC).

Addressing the participants during the conference dinner hosted at the Presidential palace, H.E. President **Nicos Anastasiades** expressed both his grave concern and the great responsibility to deal with climate change, and he highlighted the importance of the conference and the activities of The Cyprus Institute in advancing the agenda for Climate action in the Middle East - Eastern Mediterranean Region. He stressed that *“as we are located at the heart of this geographical region, as the only EU country in the Middle East, we are cognizant of the responsibility to be proactive both in implementing adaptation measures for our island but also in taking a leadership role for mitigating the impact in the wider region.”*

Pictures from the Event:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/changecyprus/28444142408/in/album-72157696585946244/>
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/changecyprus/42207068871/in/album-72157696367421634/>
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External Links:

Conference Website:

<https://www.climatechange2018.org/>

CTBTO Press Statement:

<https://www.ctbto.org/press-centre/highlights/2018/executive-secretary-official-visit-to-cyprus/>



Euronews Coverage:

<http://gr.euronews.com/2018/05/18/klimatiki-alagi-i-nea-apili-gia-ti-na-mesogio>

<http://gr.euronews.com/2018/05/20/resceu-i-apantisi-tis-ee-stin-klimatiki-allagi>

Associated Press Coverage:

<https://www.cyi.ac.cy/index.php/cyi-news/international-media-coverage-of-the-climate-change-2018-conference.html>