



# 12 STEPS AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

## POSITION PAPER

CLIMATE CHANGE IS ONE OF THE MOST PRESSING ISSUES OF OUR TIME. WE ARE NOT JUST SPEAKING OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS, BUT ALSO OF A CRISIS OF GLOBAL JUSTICE AND OF OUR ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Progressive global warming is caused by industrialization, unbridled consumption of resources and man-made greenhouse gas emissions. <sup>1</sup>

The climate crisis is a reality already, and it threatens the lives and livelihoods of billions of people as well as the survival of countless animal and plant species. Severe weather events such as floods, droughts, storms and hailstorms are also increasingly felt in Austria, where the average temperature has risen by nearly 2 °C since 1880. If we do not take appropriate and immediate action that tackles the underlying causes, a worldwide additional increase of 3 to 5 °C is expected by 2100. <sup>2</sup>

In current climate politics, existing measures are far from appropriate and often go in the wrong direction. The influence of multinational corporations' and of the financial sector on these negotiations is increasingly clear. Many of the strategies considered distract from the causes of climate change, and lead to greater injustice and inequality.

We as the critical Austrian civil society are part of a growing worldwide movement that stands up against false solutions. **Under the slogan "System Change, not Climate Change!" we appeal to develop and implement solutions that tackle the crisis at its roots.**

# WHAT IT TAKES

## 1) Binding Targets

To limit global warming to a maximum of 2 °C, binding and sanctionable rules as well as clearly defined limits for greenhouse gas emissions are absolutely essential – not just voluntary promises.<sup>3</sup>

## 2) Renewable Energy and Energy Democracy

A rapid transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources is needed. Energy production must be largely decentralized and put on a public or cooperative basis, ensuring participation and control by the citizens. A socially just energy policy includes access to affordable energy for everyone as well as a substantial reduction in our energy consumption. This is only possible by transforming our ways of production and life.

## 3) Regional Economic Cycles

It takes an economy of short distances and a switch from a throwaway to a repair society. To achieve this, we stand up for promoting a mostly local production, distribution and consumption of products and services that are geared to the basic needs of the people. All goods and services that can be produced and consumed locally should in fact be produced locally. Goods, which require larger business units for reasons of efficiency (e. g. the production of railways or railway tracks) are to be produced on a continental-regional level. A part of the goods and services will continue to be traded globally, based on the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. Trade and investment agreements are to be amended accordingly.

## 4) Food Sovereignty

Food is a human right. People who produce, distribute and consume food should be paramount instead of agribusinesses and supermarkets. Therefore, the reconstruction of the industrialized, export-oriented agricultural system towards a small-scale, agro-ecological and socially equitable

agriculture is needed. Resource-intensive and polluting forms of production of animal foodstuffs must end in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to free additional agricultural land and means of production for the production of biological and healthy food. Regional production, feeding with regional forage, high animal welfare standards and biological production methods are to be implemented for the remaining meat consumption.

## 5) Public and Environmentally Friendly Transport

We need eco-friendly and affordable mobility. This includes an extensive and attractive public transport network, the promotion of cycling and walking infrastructure as well as increased taxation of transport that is based on fossil fuels (such as flights).

## 6) Recapturing Commons – Sharing What Belongs to All of Us

We are committed to social systems in which vital resources are shared as commons and people jointly decide about their use. Water, seeds, land, forests, lakes, raw materials, air, knowledge etc. must be treated as commons. We have to protect these, as well as public services, from privatization.

## 7) Redistributing Labor, Time, Income and Wealth

The core of a socially just response to the climate crisis must be a radical redistribution of work, time, income and wealth. Redistribution and redefinition of work facilitate the reduction of unemployment and create more time for recovery, care and community work. The equitable allocation of income and wealth is an important basis for the assurance of everyone's livelihood. Work needs to be linked to the production of socially necessary goods and services. Instead of branches

of industry that cause high pollution, new jobs must be created in eco-friendly sectors of the economy (e. g. agro-ecological agriculture, recycling, refurbishment of buildings, public transport, renewable energy, care and education).

## 8) International Solidarity

Adequate financial resources are required in order to combat climate change and to mitigate the consequences of environmental damage. Industrialized countries – the historical originators of climate change – finally need to provide the promised compensation payments to regions more affected by the climate crisis.

It takes societies, where a “good life for all” is more important than profits. A “good life for all” includes justice among all people regardless of gender, origin, skin color, religion and sexual orientation – now and for future generations.

verschiedener Geschlechter, Herkunft, Hautfarben, Religionen und sexueller Orientierungen – jetzt und für zukünftige Generationen.

## WHAT MUST BE AVOIDED

We oppose answers to the climate crisis that leave the underlying causes untouched and only further aggravate existing problems. Tackling the climate crisis at its roots means overcoming currently prevailing capitalist ways of production and lifestyles based on the exploitation of people and nature and on an infinite pursuit of profit and growth as well as on competition. This way of life ignores the physical limits of our planet. In order to prevent the climate crisis from intensifying even more, the transformation of our economic system is a basic prerequisite. We therefore stand against solutions that are driving this economic system and its logics.

## 9) No more „Business as Usual“

We stand up against the paradigm of unlimited economic growth and against fossil fuel economy. Further exploitation of fossil fuels has to be avoided. That is the only way to stop global warming beyond the 2-degree target. Likewise, we oppose giant infrastructure projects such as dams, airports, highways and the increasing industrialization of agriculture. They are part of the problem and not its solution.

## 10) No to the “Green Economy“

We need to avoid proposals that only give a “green” semblance to the current economic system or pretend to be able to save the climate with market-based and largely voluntary instruments. These involve emissions trading and the CDM (Clean Development Mechanism) as well as biodiversity offsetting – all of them instruments through which companies can buy their way out of their responsibility for emissions and the destruction of nature. Instruments such as REDD + (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation), Climate Smart Agriculture or Blue Carbon are also included. They all create new profit opportunities for companies and financial markets, and ultimately exacerbate the climate crisis. We oppose the financialization of nature and measures which enhance the global dynamics of land grabbing. Moreover, voluntary, non-binding standards alone are insufficient to address the actual problems.<sup>4</sup>

## 11) No False Hopes on Purely Technological Solutions

New technologies can and will be part of our responses to climate change. But the climate crisis cannot be solved mainly by technology. In order to prevent the advance of highly problematic technologies such as geo-engineering, genetic engineering, agrofuels, synthetic biology, nuclear energy or carbon capture and storage, we must initiate a democratic discussion about these issues.<sup>5</sup>

## 12) Setting Limits Rather than Expanding Free Trade

The current free trade and investment regime boosts the climate crisis. TTIP, CETA, TISA and numerous other agreements currently under negotiation create more rights especially for global corporations; they lead to an increase in long distance cargo transports and bear the risk of degradation of environmental and social standards. Therefore, resistance against these agreements equals to effective climate protection.

## LET'S GET ACTIVE

We invite all stakeholders from civil society, politics and economy, and request them to commit themselves to the implementation of the twelve necessary steps. Many people and groups are already using a variety of means to actively work on a socio-ecological system change. These means include solidarity with climate and other refugees as well as struggles against coal mining and senseless mega-projects, protection of forests, agri-ecological farming, claiming equality, promotion of bicycle traffic and much more.

The climate crisis is not only an environmental issue, but a societal responsibility that needs to be overcome by joining forces.

**Together we want to use our strength and build up pressure, so that the necessary steps will be taken as soon as possible. Let's recognize the struggle against climate change as an opportunity for justice, emancipation and democracy.**

“System Change, not Climate Change!“ is a social movement, comprising a growing number of activists and initiatives, which work together throughout Austria, in order to bring forward real and just solutions for the global climate crisis. Until now, more than 130 organisations support this call for climate justice and systemic changes.“

**SUPPORT THE AUSTRIAN NATIONWIDE POSITION PAPER WITH YOUR INITIATIVE, ORGANIZATION OR ASSOCIATION!**

**Mail to: [info@systemchange-not-climatechange.at](mailto:info@systemchange-not-climatechange.at)**

The position paper was created in the beginning of SCNCC as a common process by: Finance & Trade Watch, Attac, ÖBV - Via Campesina Austria, FIAN, Dreikönigsaktion - Hilfswerk der Katholischen Jungschar, Alternatiba.

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\*Please find the foot notes of the position paper in the online version: <http://systemchange-not-climatechange.at/en/position-paper/>