



GA4: Environmental

Student Officer: Alexander de Vries

Issue: Defining the role of civil life and NGO's in tackling the climate crisis

TIMUN '19

Turkish International Model United Nations



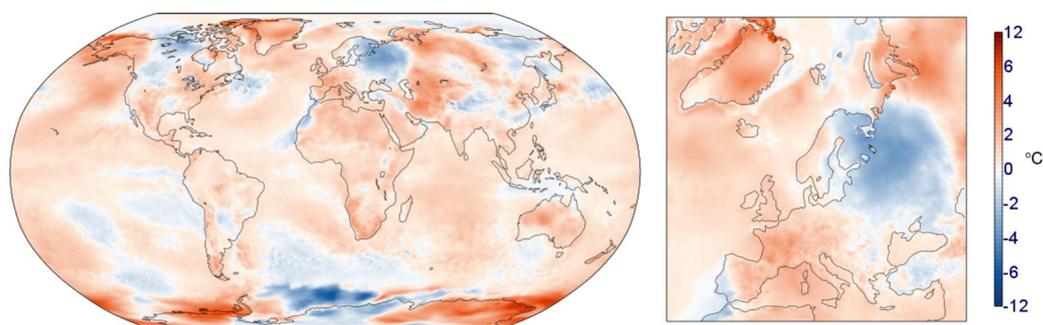
Committee: Environmental Committee (GA4)
Issue: Defining the role of civil life and NGOs in tackling the climate crisis
Student Officer: Alexander de Vries – President Chair

I. Introduction

Our climate is changing. People all over the world start experiencing the consequences of this process and how it affects our lives. There is a wide variety of the effects of climate change. One instance is the changing weather patterns. Longer periods of heat are a phenomenon we see more often. For example, July 2019 was the hottest month ever to be recorded¹. Consequences of these periods of drought are, for instance, the massive Siberian wildfires in Russia during the summer of 2019 or water scarcity in Italy in 2017. Changes in our environment cause life to become more difficult as the environment is not be able to adjust to such changes. Governments are currently not taking adequate amount of action to stop this process from happening. This concerns a lot of people because the future of our planet and our lives might not be in the best circumstances and is unpredictable. The concerns of people in our societies are often represented by NGOs or other civil organisations. These organisations make the society aware of the effects of climate change and the importance of actions that need to be taken in order to prevent the situation from getting worse. In addition, these organisations give civilians a platform to raise their voices about their concerns towards the politicians and other lawmakers or governance-related organisations. Even though these organisations represent the people's voices and concerns, these voices are often not heard by governments or other legislatures. This is the exact topic this agenda item focuses on.

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Surface air temperature anomaly for July 2019 relative to 1981-2010



¹Time Magazine: "Record-Breaking Temperatures Around the World Are 'Almost Entirely' Due to Climate Change" by Tara Law

²Copernicus Climate Change Service: "Surface air temperature anomaly for July 2019 average for the period 1981-2010"



II. Involved Countries and Organizations

This is an international topic, which applies to all nations and all climate-focused NGOs and organisations. At the moment, there is a lack of cooperation between these two parties. In order to get the climate reforms done, these parties need to cooperate in an effective way instead of the way they currently do.

Governments

Governments are the ones who decide what paths we are taking for the upcoming years and, thus, have an undoubtedly important role in the way we live, work, and produce. A government often only thinks out of an economical perspective and, therefore, does not always focus on the ecological reforms they need to do in order to fight climate change. The change from a society with a lot of pollution to a society with less pollution is a big investment and, thus, governments are often not willing to do so. This is where NGOs and other civil organisations can help with, since they have the resources for doing so.

NGOs

All NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and civil organizations focused on the combat of climate change are relevant to this issue, as the interest in cooperation should come from both sides of the table. These organisations advocate for climate justice both for humans and nature. In the past decades, these organisations gained a lot of attention and caused the climate crisis to be one of the most important topics in national and international politics. Some organisations are active in a lot of countries, such as WWF, Greenpeace, and indirectly-relevant organisations, including Doctors Without Borders and Oxfam. These organisations play a role during climate change related crises on the humanitarian side.

Brazil

An example of a government that takes too little effort to fight climate change is the government of the Federal Republic of Brazil. At the moment, a far-right president, Jair Bolsonaro, governs Brazil. His policies on climate change are completely contradicting the policies the UN wishes to follow to fight climate change. Environmentalists blame these policies of the Bolsonaro administration for the increase in fires this year as there was an increase of 77 per cent in the number of fires in the Amazon rainforest compared to 2018³ with more than 80.000 fires. Without the presence of this “carbon sink”, the Amazon rainforest, the world’s ability to lock up carbon will be reduced, compounding the effects of global warming⁴. These fires affect the climate for flora and fauna massively. The Amazon harbors 10% of the world’s known species⁵, and is one

³ BBC News: “Amazon fires: Jair Bolsonaro to miss summit for surgery” by -

⁴ BBC Future: “Amazon: Lungs of the planet” by -

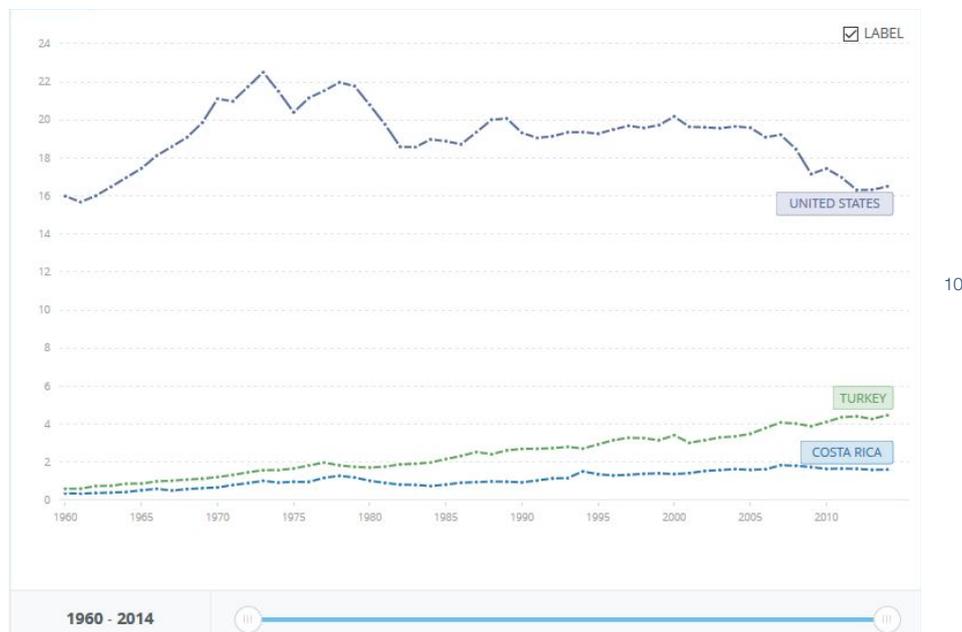
⁵ WWF: “Inside the Amazon” by -



of the most complex and extensive ecosystems in the world. The deforestation and fires cause the forest to lose its biodiversity which affects the whole ecosystem both in short and long term.

Costa Rica

Costa Rica might not be the country with the biggest industries, population and pollution, but is a country with a progressive governance on the topic of climate change. The Environment Minister, Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, says his grandchildren in 2035 will have the same carbon footprint as his grandparents in 1940s and that the grandchildren will not have a carbon footprint after 2050⁶. While Costa Rica only has a tiny share in the international climate-changing emissions, the plan of this country can be a model for other countries. The government wishes to make the transport sector and the number of automobiles, including cars, trucks, and busses, drop to a lower number, or to electrify these vehicles. Transportation makes up 40 per cent of all Costa Rica's climate-changing emissions⁷. Besides making transportation greener, Costa Rica also wants to produce green energy. At the moment, most of the energy in the country comes out of renewable energy sources, such as hydropower, wind, solar, and geothermal energy sources⁸. 98 per cent of the power generated in the country during the year 2019 is expected to be produced cleanly⁹. Internationally, Costa Rica can be seen as a pioneer on the topic of emission reduction.



⁶ Guardian: "Costa Rica unveils plan to achieve zero emissions by 2050 in climate change fight" by Reuters in San José

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ NY Times: "Tiny Costa Rica Has a Green New Deal, Too. It Matters for the Whole Planet." by Somini Sengupta and Alexander Villegas

⁹ Reuters: "Despite drought, Costa Rica's electricity stays clean - but not cheap" by Sebastian Rodriguez

¹⁰ "CO2 emissions (metric tons per capita)" graph by World Bank Data



UNESCO

UNESCO is a good example of an organisation that cooperates with both governments and NGOs. UNESCO promotes international cooperation on the topic of education, science and culture. In Paris there is the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee. This committee connects NGOs with UNESCO and other NGOs. In December 2017 they discussed the topic of “NGOs and Climate Change”. The UNESCO Liaison Committee states, “Member States should take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts through education, sciences, culture and information and communication, in line with their respective National Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the COP21 Paris Agreement, and in the overall context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDG 13,”¹¹ which calls on all member states to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. In this committee, UNESCO examines the state of cooperation between the organisations, conducts collective consultations concerning the broad lines of UNESCO programs, and facilitates cooperation between organisations with shared interest¹², such as climate focused NGOs. On their website, there is a complete list of partnering NGOs. This committee is a perfect example of a counsel that encourages the role of civil life and NGOs in the combat against climate change.

III. Focused Overview of the Issue

NGOs and other civil organisations are a phenomenon characteristic for our modern society. The main roles of these organisations are monitoring the implementation of international treaties, organizing development projects, representing and educating civil society on a certain issue. As we can see, they play a role of great importance in addressing and combating issues that affect our societies on a national and international level. The importance of this is not always recognised by the governments of countries. At this moment in time, there is a great variety of NGOs on all sorts of subjects. On some topics, there is a lot of cooperation between governments and NGOs, such as in the example the cooperation in development aid from western countries towards developing countries or regions. Nonetheless, there is a lack of cooperation on a lot of other topics. One of them is climate change and the climate reforms that need to be implemented. Besides the fact that there is a lack of cooperation between governments and NGOs, we often see that the concerns made clear by NGOs are not heard or seen by the governments. The reason for this can be that a country does not have the democratic possibilities for civil society to influence governance or a lack of policy from the governments towards NGOs. Another important point is that there is missing an adequate legal framework to create an effective NGO-government cooperation¹³ even though the concerns of NGOs and

¹¹ “NGOs and Climate Change” (Concept Note) by the UNESCO Liaison Committee

¹² The Liaison Committee’s strategy 2017-2018 NGO-UNESCO by -

¹³ The Liaison Office as a Strong Tool for Successful NGO-Government Cooperation by Maria Gerasimova



civil organisations on the topic of climate change are often confirmed by official reports and organisations like the United Nations.

National and Multilateral level

On a national level, cooperation between NGOs and governments can make a big impact on the way the society and government of a country work on climate issues. NGOs can make a big difference in how a country, on a national level, is going to tackle the climate issue.

On an international level, NGOs and civil organisations can play an important role too. For instance, a drastic increase in involvement of NGOs in global governance has been seen in the 1990s¹⁴. The UN itself already cooperates with NGOs on topics varying from human rights to election monitoring. NGOs and other civil organisations are a driving force behind international cooperation because they mobilise public support for international agreements. Besides the mobilisation of public support for agreements, bigger NGOs are often active in more than one nation. This means that NGOs can be of interest on a national and international level for the establishment of agreements and development in the climate issue.

Greta Thunberg

A great example of a civilian making a difference on the topic of climate change is Greta Thunberg. The 16-year-old girl decided to strike for our climate in August, 2018. She sat down in front of the Swedish parliament everyday. After gaining media attention, she and her strike became internationally famous. This media attention made other young people think about striking too, and so they did. For example, on 15 March 2019, young people struck in 2,233 cities and towns in 128 countries¹⁵. Greta is the founder of the “Fridays for Future” movement and gained a lot of attention with it. Because of this attention, the OPEC (Organization of Oil Exporting Countries) called Thunberg with her other young climate activists “the greatest threat” for the fossil fuels industries¹⁶. Besides the attention in the media with interviews in the Guardian and Time Magazine, and other news articles, Thunberg got the opportunity to meet the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, and give a speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos as well as the UN climate change summit in Katowice and at the European Parliament.

She is the perfect example of a civilian expressing his or her concerns about the climate issue. She had to do it via strikes, but delegates should try to form resolution that will make it easier for governments and NGOs or other civil organisations to stay in close contact, so that the process of

¹⁴ The Role of NGOs and Civil Society in Global Environmental Governance by Barbara Gemmill and Abimbola Bamidele-Izu.

¹⁵ Guardian: “School climate strikes: 1.4 million people took part, say campaigners” by Damian Carrington

¹⁶ Guardian: Greta Thunberg: ‘They see us as a threat because we’re having an impact’ by Ali Smith



finding a solution for climate change will go smoother and the people of our societies will be easily heard.

Paris Climate Agreement

With the attendance of governments, businesses, and NGOs, governments from all over the world came to an agreement at the 2015 Paris climate conference (COP21). This agreement was the Paris Climate Agreement, which aims to strengthen the efforts taken by governments to combat climate change. One of the major goals of the agreement is to keep the temperature rise this century below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels¹⁷. Of the 195 nations that signed the deal 185 have ratified the agreement as of the 1st of September 2019¹⁸. A few of the key aspects of the climate agreement are:

- *“Climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information”* (Art 12) is also to be enhanced under the Agreement.¹⁹
- *“Transparency (Art. 13), implementation and compliance”* (Art. 15) – The Paris Agreement relies on a robust transparency and accounting system to provide clarity on action and support by Parties, with flexibility for their differing capabilities of parties. In addition to reporting information on mitigation, adaptation and support, the agreement requires that the information submitted by each party undergoes international technical expert review. The agreement also includes a mechanism that will facilitate implementation and promote compliance in a non-adversarial and non-punitive manner, and will report annually to the CMA.²⁰

These are just two of the key aspects of the Paris Climate Agreement. It is evident, even by only seeing two aspects, that NGOs and civil society can play an important role in the implementation of the agreement all around the globe. In cooperation with governments, NGOs and civil society can make most nations succeed in the reforms needed to reach the goals.

Green New Deal - USA

The Trump administration wants to resign from the Paris Climate Agreement. However, it is not possible to officially resign from the document until 2020²¹. President Trump made a series of rollbacks on the topic of climate change. With the future in mind, the Climate Action Tracker has

¹⁷ UNFCCC: What is the Paris Agreement? by UNFCCC

¹⁸ UNTC: Status of Treaties - Chapter XXVII Environment 7. d Paris Agreement (Paris, 12 December 2015)

¹⁹ UNFCCC: What is the Paris Agreement? by UNFCCC

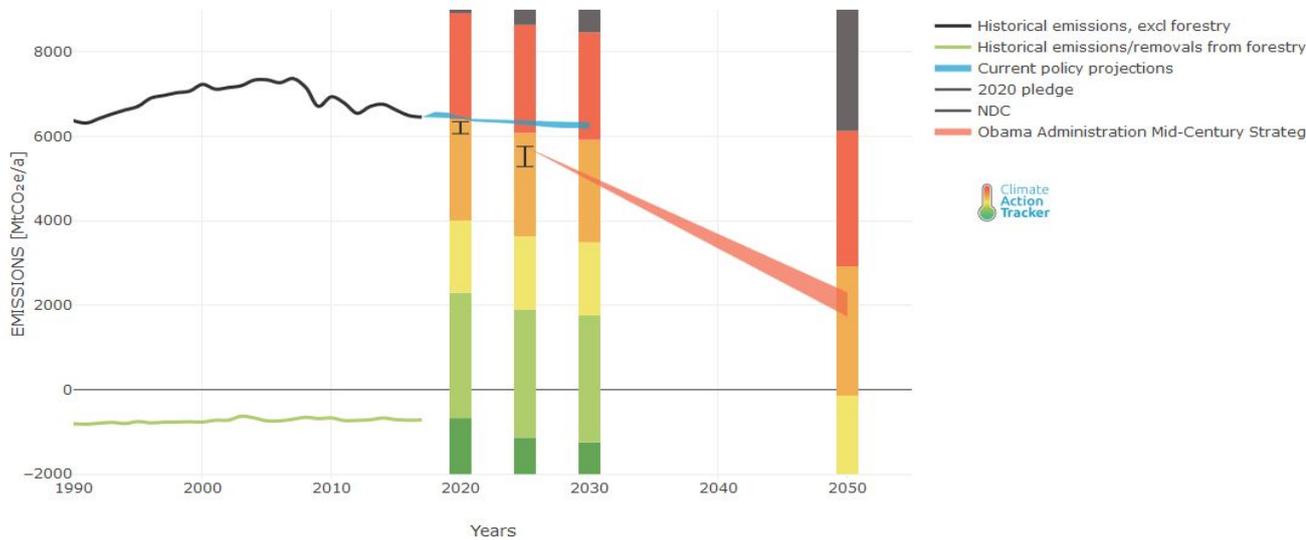
²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Washington Post: “Trump withdrew from the Paris climate deal a year ago. Here’s what has changed.” by Chris Mooney



rated the United States of America as highly insufficient with meeting the Paris Climate Agreement goals.

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Keeping the current actions taken by the Trump Administration in mind, we can see that the climate topic has forcefully entered the debate in the United States with the “Green New Deal”. The Green New Deal was introduced by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) of New York and Senator Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts. It calls, amongst other points, for reforms in usage of fossil fuels, keeping in check the emissions of greenhouse gases, and guaranteeing high-paying jobs in the green energy sector.

For a couple of years variations of a proposal, made by a think tank like the Green Party, have been around. After the 2018 midterm elections, the Sunrise Movement, a youth activist group, laid out a strategy and protested in front of the office of the soon-to-be-speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi. AOC joined the protests, lent her support for their proposal, and created the base for the joint resolution. This is a perfect example of how the voice of citizens was heard and responded to. The protesters had a proposal; AOC listened to their concerns and brought their proposal to national politics.

²² Climate Action Tracker: USA Country Summary (17 June 2019)



IV. Key Vocabulary

Non-governmental organisation (NGO): These organisations operate independently from any government. The goal of these organisations is to address an issue, in this case the climate crisis. There are NGOs on national and international activities.

Climate crisis: This term is often used by environmentalists, green politicians, and media. They describe the effects of climate change as a crisis.

COP: Stands for Conference of the Parties. Is the supreme decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It reviews the effectiveness of the implementation of the decisions made by the Convention. COPs are held annually. The first COP was held in 1995 in Berlin. The next Conference of Parties will take place in Santiago de Chile and will be the 25th Conference of the Parties (COP25)²³.

NDC: NDC Stands for Nationally Determined Contributions. They are the most important effects of the Paris Agreement and the achievement of the goals in this agreement. NDCs embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change²⁴. Article 4, Paragraph 2 of the Paris Agreement requires all parties to prepare, communicate, and maintain successive NDCs that the party wants to achieve.

The CAT (Climate Action Tracker) monitors whether governments are following their NDCs and if they will succeed in their goal to remain under the 2 Degrees Celsius.

V. Important Events & Chronology

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Event
1992	At the Rio Earth Summit, the UN Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was established.
21 March 1994	UNFCCC was put into implementation.
18 March - 7 April 1995	First Conference of Parties (COP) was held in Berlin.
1 - 10 December 1997	At COP3, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted.

²³ UNFCCC: "Convention of the Parties (COP)" by UNFCCC

²⁴ UNFCCC: "Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC's)" by UNFCCC



28 November-9 December 2005	At COP11, Montreal Action Plan was adopted.
28 November-11 December 2011	At COP17, the Green Climate Fund was created.
30 November-12 December 2015	At COP21, the Paris Climate Convention was adopted.
1 April 2016	The Paris Climate Agreement was signed.

VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

- 39 C/46 UNESCO Strategy for Action on Climate Change
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259255>
 - This is a Programme and Meeting Document by UNESCO. It describes the aims and activities of UNESCO on the topic of climate change and climate adaptation.
- Chapter XVII, 7. d Paris Agreement: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf
 - This agreement is a major breakthrough. As mentioned before, this agreement aims to achieve climate goals to leave the global temperature rise under 2 degrees Celsius.
 - 195 nations signed the agreement²⁵.
- Chapter XVII, 7. a Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/kpeng.pdf>
 - This treaty aims to let its parties commit to set internationally binding emissions targets. The treaty places a heavier burden on developed countries, since they had 150 years of industrialisation.
 - There were 192 parties, and 82 signed the protocol²⁶.

VII. Possible Solutions

The goal is to find a situation in which the NGOs and governments do not see each other as oppositions, but as partners, and foster their powers to combat climate change and its effects. NGOs and civil society can play an important role in monitoring the measures taken by governments; they can help a lot in making the green transition happen as they have a lot of data and experience to share with governments.

²⁵ UNTC: Status of Treaties - Chapter XXVII Environment 7. d Paris Agreement (Paris 12, December 2015)

²⁶ UNTC: Status of Treaties - Chapter XXVII Environment 7. a Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Kyoto, 11 December 1997)



One of the first things that comes up in mind when understanding this is the establishment of a national or regional climate council.

First, of course, a society needs to have the right framework and facilities to get the cooperation started. These can be think tanks created by governments who will advise governments or climate councils that will represent both the governance party and the NGO/civil society party. There needs to be a good base form where you can start to expand the cooperation.

An NGO or civil organisation can help or advice a government on a lot of different important aspects of governance. A government can, for example, consult an NGO during legislative processes. An NGO often has experts working with or in close cooperation with them. Besides the experts that are working with an NGO, international NGOs often collect and analyze information and provide input to agendas and policy development processes. These experts and other members of the NGO can bring new perspectives to a legislative process when in contact with a government. Currently, governments are not always doing this. These experts and members are independent and might know situations and issues more detailed than politicians or employees of ministries. By bringing these two parties together, you can create more detailed and specific rules and laws.

Another point the two can help each other on is making the society aware of climate change and what the people can do themselves to combat climate change. These awareness programs are more powerful and effective if they are created in cooperation between governments and NGOs. A government has the right resources to start a program on a national level and an NGO already is in close contact with civilians and has the right resources in terms of facts and figures.

Since most relevant NGOs invest in all kinds of projects that help in the fight against climate change, a cooperation with a government on the topic of sustainable investment could be another point of interest for both parties. If governments and NGOs combine their forces, their sustainable development investments might be more effective and impactful.

The points above are more on a governmental level. The cooperation between governments, NGOs, and civil society could also play a direct role in the lives of citizens. The awareness programs can have a huge impact on the way people think and act around the climate issue. Take for instance the possibility for citizens to participate in climate events or councils in their neighbourhood. When citizens become a part of the reforms and are aware of the positive effects, the support base for these reforms will grow.

Briefly, the cooperation between governments, NGOs, and civil society can make a difference on a lot of different levels and aspects. An effective resolution should embody most of these aspects. A close look at



the actual climate resolutions to be aware of the ways and topics governments and the United Nations wish governance to be reformed is also significant.

IX. Useful Links

The Role of Nongovernmental Organizations in the Climate Change Negotiations by Chiara Giorgetti:

<https://scholarship.richmond.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1892&context=law-faculty-publications>

The Role of NGOs and Civil Society in Global Environmental Governance by Barbara Gemmill and Abimbola Bamidele-Izu (only from page 77/260 on):

<https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=fes-pubs#page=77>

“NGOs and Climate Change” (Concept Note) Eight international forum of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO (Liaison Committee):

http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ICE/PDF/forum_climate_change_concept_note_en.pdf

“What is the Paris agreement?” by UNFCCC:

<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement>

“Why civil society matters” by UN Environment:

<https://www.unenvironment.org/civil-society-engagement/why-civil-society-matters>



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