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Country: Switzerland

A few decades ago, the rapid increase in greenhouse gas emissions, caused by the important use of fossil fuels, brought along a great variety of environmental problems; global warming being the most prominent issue, humanity came to the realization that something had to be done. Presently, the Swiss Confederation recognizes that the future of mankind is bound to become more obscure if proactive changein the matter of finding new and more “environmentally-friendly” energy sources is not made. Spawn out of these environmental concerns, Switzerland has met with world leaders at multiple occasions to put in place goals for the future and to establish policies, such as during the Earth Summit in 1992, the Rio+20 in 2012 or the COP 21 in 2015. Switzerland’s intention for this 22nd session of the UNFCCC Conference is therefore to make sure that all nations have put in place an adequate process in order to reach the international goal of keeping the climate increase below 2°C.

In the past, the Confederation has set “ambitious and forward-looking” (King 2015) goals to decrease the amount of fossil fuels emitted. In the case of the Kyoto Protocol, the environmental goals were successfully met even though Switzerland holds a low per-capita emissions level, which reduces the country’s potential to rapidly reduce its emissions. Seeing that Switzerland’s domestic emissions are impressive compared to the world’s average, we aim to utilize international credits and help reduce greenhouse gas emission oversees in the future. The aftermath of the Conference of Paris is therefore to reduce by 50% the greenhouse gas cuts on 1990, for 2030 (King 2015). As for resource mobilization, the Confederation believes that funds ought to be created in order to provide help to nations that are in development; however, a country’s investment in this fund should depend on the extent of its role in the emission of greenhouse gases. Mitigation is especially imperative for The Swiss Confederation, seeing that if a decrease in greenhouse gas emission does not occur, the adaptation plans put in place will have to be revised (University of Bern 2014). Although discussing adaptation is necessary, seeing that it is dependent on mitigation efforts, Switzerland insists that we ought to prioritize solutions regarding the stabilization of atmospheric temperatures for the course of the Conference.

Additionally, Switzerland recognizes that global warming affects demographical health risks, and hence supports the implementation of policies aiming to alter health systems such that they are less vulnerable to climate hazards. The health issues that the Swiss population is particularly at risk for are numerous. They include heat stress, as heat islands are susceptible to form in metropolitan areas and urban centers and directly affect the well-being of the elderly and of children (European Environment Agency 2015). Also, floods, due to the melting of glaciers or permafrost in the Confederation’s case, have an impact on the population’s health, as they can modify the quality of surface waters, increase the risk of water borne diseases and cause psychological stress to residents as infrastructure damages often tend to follow flooding (European Environment Agency 2015). The federation plans on discussing these health matters at the conference, and hopes to leave with solutions in order to overcome them.

Furthermore, the Swiss Confederation acknowledges that the number of people displaced due to environmental disasters ought to increase due to the changing climate, and views a person seeking asylum due to climate change as a refugee. In this train of thought, the Confederation prescribes to the idea that climate refugees must be added into the legal definition of a refugee, in order to ensure that populations displaced in cause of climate change are protected and have access to medical insurance, subventions and shelter if they ought to leave their nation to ensure their safety. Furthermore, Switzerland wishes to discuss the implementation of policies regarding internally displaced persons (IDP), because of environmental disasters, in order to prevent them from becoming refugees. In sum, the increase in climate refugees is eminent and inevitable and Switzerland wishes to expand the definition of a refugee to ensure that everyone has the right to a sustainable and viable environment.

To conclude, although the certain increase in climate refugees and the escalation of health issues related to climate change are decisive topics, the Swiss Confederations seeks to prioritize the discussion of mitigation efforts to reach greenhouse gas emission goals during the Conference due to the aforementioned reasons. Switzerland is an active participant in the construction of international policies and agreements to regulate climate and its effects, and hopes to provide support to countries by helping them put in place effective plans that will lead to the achievement of the goals of the Paris Conference.

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