

Report on the (Our) Climate Affairs 2017 Conference*

Marcell László Tóth

The (Our) Climate Affairs 2017 conference was held on 25 May 2017 in Budapest within the framework of the National Sustainability Professional Day. The venue of the event held with the participation of approximately 300 people was the Ludovika Campus of the National University of Public Service (NKE). The following topics were discussed at the international scientific conference of the Cabinet of Sustainable Development Studies of the National University of Public Service (NKE FFTK): the consequences of climate change, adjustment and resilience to these and their connections to urban ecosystems of municipalities and cities.

The conference was opened by *András Patyi*, Rector of the National University of Public Service. He emphasised the fact that considerable rain had fallen in Budapest, a couple of days before the event, resulting in serious stoppages, and this makes the event aimed at dealing with climate change and vulnerability even more relevant and timely. The opening presentation was delivered by *Csaba Kőrösi*, director of the Environmental Sustainability Directorate of the Office of the President of the Republic, who was also the benefactor of the event; as an expert on the topic, who had previously worked at the UN, said that although the problems caused by climate change have been recognised, they must be managed and remedied together, not separately, since the most efficient approach is managing the entire system together. He is of the view that success can be achieved if the solutions and climate adaptation can be made marketable and in his opinion, this might be achievable.

In his presentation entitled “Climate change and water wars?”, *András Szöllősi-Nagy*, who also has considerable UN experience, called attention to the importance of drinking water and its increasing future role. Namely, water is a precious treasure since we cannot live without it. The lack of this and the difficulties of access will cause social problems in the future and it is only up to us whether we’ll solve these serious challenges with war or co-operation. According to an expert, who also works at the NKE, there is no hope if political leaders do not comply with the Paris Climate Agreement. He considers the sustainable development targets, designated

* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official view of the Magyar Nemzeti Bank.

Marcell László Tóth is a PhD student at the Regional and Economics Doctoral School of the Széchenyi István University. E-mail: marcelltoth@gazmag.hu.

in connection with the agreement that became effective in 2016, as too ambitious, according to him the implementation of the section about water would be the most important, since this constitutes the foundation of several other objectives.

Charles J. Vörösmarty talked about the connection of climate change and urban development. The professor at the City University of New York called attention to the fact that since 2007 more than half of the population of the world lives in cities and this ratio will only increase. Moreover, cities will become vulnerable against the changes in climate in several respects. The expert, who has Hungarian ancestors as well, emphasised the challenges caused by permanent heat waves expected in the future and the increasing importance of water safety, too. He also said that we exhaust the resources of the Earth to a larger extent than they are capable of renewing. Currently the global ecological footprint is such that we would need one and a half planets for the sustainable way of life. It depends on our decisions made today whether one available Earth will be sufficient for our way of life in 2050, since if we do not change our habits and needs, we will require two and a half Earths, by the middle of the century, to maintain humanity.

The last plenary presentation was delivered by *Judit Bartholy*, who approached the topic from the side of meteorology. In relation to the greenhouse effect, she stated that the phenomenon in and of itself is essentially good; however the problem is that, as an impact of this, various harmful materials also remain in the atmosphere (the decay time of some of these is hundreds of years). The well-known researcher also talked about the Paris Agreement, according to which we would like to keep the increase of global average temperature under 2 degrees Celsius. The professor at ELTE said that there are areas in the world where increase has already exceeded this threshold. This is a clear proof that the extent and effects of climate change can be different in the various parts of the globe. For example, temperature, on average, increases everywhere and the level of precipitation also grows globally, meanwhile the annual average rainfall is less and less in Hungary, which causes significant damage in agriculture. More rainy days are expected in Hungary; however, the distribution of these will be uneven and we have to prepare for the increase in the number of very hot days as well.

After the plenary sessions of the conference, work has continued in two blocks in parallel, in a total of seven sections. These discussed the following topics: sustainable cities; water management of settlements; Sustainable Development Objectives and urban sustainability; food safety of settlements; urban ecosystems; anthropomorphic economy; and decarbonisation of cities; contributing to the exchange of experiences between the participants and broadening their horizons often with useful and visionary discussions.