



Plenary sitting

B9-0391/2022

12.9.2022

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the consequences of drought, fire, and other extreme weather phenomena:
increasing the EU's efforts to fight climate change
(2022/2829(RSP))

Tiemo Wölken, Clara Aguilera
on behalf of the S&D Group

European Parliament resolution on the consequences of drought, fire, and other extreme weather phenomena: increasing the EU's efforts to fight climate change (2022/2829(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 28 November 2019 on the climate and environment emergency¹,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 on the European Green Deal (COM(2019)0640) and to Parliament's resolution of 15 January 2020 thereon²,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 ('European Climate Law')³,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 May 2020 entitled 'EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives' (COM(2020)0380) and to Parliament's resolution of 9 June 2021 thereon⁴,
- having regard to the farm to fork strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system (COM(2020)0381) and its resolution of 20 October 2021 thereon⁵,
- having regard to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and in particular the 2015 Paris Agreement thereof, which entered into force on 4 November 2016,
- having regard to the UNFCCC Glasgow Climate Pact, adopted on 13 November 2021,
- having regard to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which entered into force on 29 December 1993, and the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) to be held in Montreal from 5-17 December 2022,
- having regard to the assessment reports and special reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC),
- having regard to the global assessment report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) of May 2019 on biodiversity

¹ OJ C 232, 16.6.2021, p. 28.

² OJ C 270, 7.7.2021, p. 2.

³ OJ L 243, 9.7.2021, p. 1.

⁴ OJ C 67, 8.2.2022, p. 25.

⁵ OJ C 184, 5.5.2022, p. 2.

and ecosystem services,

- having regard to its resolution of 17 December 2020 on the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change⁶,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 September 2020 on the European Year of Greener Cities 2022⁷,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 17 November 2021 entitled ‘EU Soil Strategy for 2030: Reaping the benefits of healthy soils for people, food, nature and climate’ (COM(2021)0699) and to Parliament’s resolution of 28 April 2021 on soil protection⁸,
 - having regard to its resolution of 8 September 2015 on the follow-up to the European Citizens’ Initiative Right2Water⁹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 9 October 2008 on addressing the challenge of water scarcity and droughts in the European Union¹⁰,
 - having regard to its resolution of 4 September 2003 on the effects of the summer heat wave¹¹,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas according to the IPCC, it is clear that the climate crisis makes extreme weather events such as floods, storms and heatwaves more frequent and more intense; whereas this means that precipitation and storms are getting heavier, heatwaves are getting hotter and droughts are getting longer and more severe;
- B. whereas the latest update of the Combined Drought Indicator (CDI) points to 47 % of Europe being in warning conditions and 17 % in alert conditions;
- C. whereas the European Drought Observatory (EDO) has noted that cumulatively, 64 % of Europe is still under warning or alert, with widening areas of fire danger across the EU, putting European agricultural areas under unprecedented stress; whereas at the same time, water and heat stresses has worsened significantly the previous negative outlook on yields for summer crops, as reported in the Joint Research Centre’s (JRC) Monitoring Agricultural Resources Bulletin of August 2022; whereas in the agriculture sector, the EDO has noted that yield forecasts for grain maize, soybeans and sunflowers at EU level are reported as being 16 %, 15 %, and 12 % below the five-year average respectively; whereas for winter crops such as wheat and barley, yields in some regions are reduced by up to 30 %; whereas the EDO has also noted that a severe lack of rain has affected almost all rivers across Europe, affecting the fossil-, nuclear- and hydro-

⁶ OJ C 445, 29.10.2021, p. 156.

⁷ OJ C 385, 22.9.2021, p. 167.

⁸ OJ C 506, 15.12.2021, p. 38.

⁹ OJ C 316, 22.9.2017, p. 99.

¹⁰ OJ C 9 E, 15.1.2010, p. 33.

¹¹ OJ C 76 E, 25.3.2004, p. 382.

based energy sectors as well as river transport, and that several Member States have taken measures to restrict water use as supplies could still be compromised in the coming weeks;

- D. whereas the drought endangers European electricity supplies from fossil-, nuclear- and hydro-based power sources;
 - E. whereas the IPCC warns that the Mediterranean region is particularly sensitive to the impacts of climate change and that large areas will be particularly vulnerable not only to the reduction of water resources but also to their variability;
 - F. whereas in southern Europe, a measured temperature rise of just 2 °C will cause more than a third of the population to suffer from water scarcity problems and, if no action is taken, the future scenario will be one of low water availability, more floods and more droughts;
 - G. whereas considering the implications that extreme heat events, fires and droughts can have for the conservation of the natural environment and biodiversity, in particular in forest areas, the preservation and restoration of the natural environment and biodiversity and the maintaining of resilient ecosystems in good conservation status have a key role to play in reducing the risks and negative impacts associated with these extreme events;
 - H. whereas between 1 June and 31 August this year, wildfires caused around 6.4 megatonnes of carbon emissions in Europe – levels not seen since the summer of 2007 according to the EU's Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS); whereas the figure is based on satellite observations of active forest fires and remotely sensed data used to estimate the quantity of biomass burned and thereby the emissions of smoke pollutants;
 - I. whereas in the summer of 2022, France and Spain both recorded their highest carbon emissions since the summer of 2003 and whereas wildfires in France destroyed over 62 000 hectares between the start of the year and 3 September – six times the full-year average for the period 2006 to 2021, according to CAMS;
 - J. whereas wildfires between June and August 2022 are also estimated to have emitted 6 600 tonnes of black carbon, 940 000 tonnes of carbon monoxide and 31 000 tonnes of nitrogen oxides;
- 1. Expresses its deepest sympathy for and solidarity with the families of the those who died and with the inhabitants of the devastated areas, which include many elderly people living in less-favoured rural areas, and salutes the dedication of the full-time and voluntary firefighters and members of the public who fought the fires and the heat tirelessly, often at risk to their lives;
 - 2. Calls on the social, medical and emergency services in the various Member States to evaluate the kind of preventative or emergency action that should be taken in any similar climatic situation that may occur in the future;
 - 3. Warns that climate change-induced heatwaves are silent killers all over Europe; calls on the Member States and regional and local authorities to put in place heat-health

emergency action plans and to improve urban planning to cope with more frequent heatwaves and abnormal weather events;

4. Stresses that vulnerable people and low-income households are at particular risk of suffering from climate-change induced extreme weather events and need support to adapt to the changing climate;
5. Draws attention to the health impacts of wildfires and the associated air pollution, and expresses concern at the World Meteorological Organization's prediction that these are expected to increase, even under a low emissions scenario¹²; notes that as the planet warms, wildfires and associated air pollution are expected to increase, even under a low emissions scenario and notes that in addition to human health impacts, this will also affect ecosystems as air pollutants settle from the atmosphere to the earth's surface; acknowledges, moreover, that wildfires have a serious impact on the health of ecosystems as air pollutants settle from the atmosphere; points to how the climate crisis has an impact on biodiversity and the reduction of ecosystems' resilience and the subsequent impacts for public health, and therefore insists on the importance of a One Health Approach;
6. Points to how the climate crisis exacerbates existing inequalities; emphasises that low-income households and vulnerable people are particularly impacted by the climate crisis and require particular support to adapt to the changing climate; welcomes social policies throughout Member States that protect workers from the adverse effects of the climate crisis at the workplace and encourages Member States to integrate climate adaptation into their labour and social policies;
7. Underlines that principle 20 of the European Pillar of Social Rights has to be brought about through legislative and financial measures ensuring that everyone has access to good quality and affordable water, sanitation, clean energy and green transport; stresses that in the light of climate effects which increase the frequency, intensity and duration of heatwaves, droughts, fires and other extreme weather phenomena, the EU should adopt a policy framework with measures for a social climate compensation mechanism that can be financed by a more ambitious Social Climate Fund including the protection of biodiversity, green areas and water resources in disadvantaged communities;
8. Calls on Member States to take into account the impact of occupational psychosocial risks, occupational diseases and risks related to climate change, such as heatwaves, droughts or wildfires, on the health and safety of workers, in particular in the construction, agricultural and public service sectors, and to address the impact of present and future crises, including climate change, on the labour market by supporting workers who are temporarily in 'technical unemployment' because employers have been forced to suspend their production or services, as well as by supporting self-employed workers and small businesses to retain staff and maintain their activities;
9. Points out that the severe precipitation deficit and resulting reduced river levels have a

¹² World Meteorological Organization, 'WMO Air Quality and Climate Bulletin highlights impacts of wildfires', 7 September 2022, <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/wmo-air-quality-and-climate-bulletin-highlights-impact-of-wildfires>

negative impact on hydropower generation and the cooling systems of fossil and nuclear energy plants; emphasises the need, therefore, for a faster switch to sustainable and renewable energies based on wind and solar in order to render our electricity system more independent from extreme weather and the impacts of climate change;

10. Emphasises that healthy, natural ecosystems are more resilient to extreme weather events; calls, therefore, for closer-to-nature forestry to become the norm in the EU and welcomes the Commission proposals for a Nature Restoration Law which should be adopted as fast as possible; notes that greater use could be made of the common agricultural policy (CAP) to support farmers switching to ecological farming methods and to improve soils, water, air and ecosystems;
11. Highlights the dramatic situation of the ongoing climate and environment emergency and calls for the highest ambition regarding the 'Fit for 55' package to achieve the reduction of at least 55 % of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, as mandated by the European Climate Law, as climate change and the subsequent warming of the planet increase the probability of droughts and heat waves and other extreme weather phenomena; stresses that the current crisis is not solely due to water scarcity in the soil, but is also exacerbated by climate change and its impacts;
12. Notes that dead wood belongs to healthy and climate-resilient forests and does not automatically constitute a fire hazard in all locations;
13. Calls for a reforestation policy for drought-affected areas based on respect for their bioclimatic and environmental features, and hopes that great store will be set by the rehabilitation of the specific local rural landscape;
14. Strongly condemns the criminal actions of the individuals responsible for starting certain fires deliberately and calls on Member States to make every possible effort to ensure that they are brought to justice;
15. Interprets the recent extreme weather conditions as further evidence of the negative effects of climate change and underlines that these extreme weather conditions are another sign of the need for ambitious world action to halt climate change; considers that the EU should play a leading role in this process and redouble its efforts in the key fields of the environment, energy, transport and agriculture;
16. Recalls that drought has been badly affecting some European regions for many months, becoming more intense and affecting wider areas since the early part of this year, with many reservoirs or water sources depleted as early as the month of February;
17. Observes that in August, the drought situation in many regions of Europe remained severe, worsened by heat stress along with a lack of rain over many months, and that JRC experts have indicated that the current drought appears to be the worst in at least 500 years;
18. Takes note of the updated assessment of Europe's drought situation based on analyses

by the EDO13, published on 22 August 2022 using data from CEMS, which noted that 47 % of the EU was still under warning conditions, meaning that precipitation had been less than usual and soil moisture was in deficit, and 17 % of the EU remained on alert, with vegetation and crops showing the negative effects of drought;

19. Supports the Commission's intention to contribute to an overall cooling effect by setting up an EU platform for urban greening; calls on the Commission to set ambitious and specific binding targets on urban biodiversity, nature-based solutions, ecosystem-based approaches and green infrastructure, which would benefit both humans and wildlife and contribute to the overall biodiversity targets; stresses the need to include measures such as a minimum share of green roofs on new buildings, supporting urban farming, including the use of productive trees, where appropriate, ensuring that no chemical pesticides are used and reducing fertiliser use in EU urban green areas, and increasing the number of green spaces in line with the number of inhabitants, while also addressing inequalities in access to green spaces; calls on the Commission and the Member States, moreover, to extend terrestrial and marine ecological corridors in urban areas, including by developing a Trans-European Network for Green Infrastructure (TEN-G) linked to a Trans-European Nature Network (TEN-N);
20. Calls for an obligation for cities with at least 20 000 inhabitants to prepare urban greening plans as a neighbourhood approach to create biodiverse and accessible urban forests including fruit trees, parks, gardens, urban farms, green roofs and walls, watercourses, the inclusion of autochthonous plant species and tree-lined streets based on the positive impact of such cooling measures on the urban microclimate and health, in particular for vulnerable groups; calls, in addition, for all the necessary renovation of public spaces with the aim of increasing energy savings;
21. Observes with concern increases in the burning of primary woody biomass for energy and calls for more ambitious biomass sustainability criteria, the implementation of the cascading principle and for greater efforts towards less monoculture and more biodiverse and resilient forests in Europe;
22. Is concerned about the risk of pyro-cumulonimbus formation from forest fires and the negative impact on the stratosphere and the ozone layer; calls, therefore, for deliberate fires and tree burning in forests to be reduced as much as possible;
23. Calls for measures to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, as well as the conservation and maintenance of the associated aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems;
24. Calls for the necessary measures, whether structural or management-related, to be included in water planning in order to adjust water demands to the water resources and environmental requirements of water bodies, taking into account the effects of climate change and giving priority to human consumption;
25. calls for drought management plans to be drawn up based on a system of indicators that

¹³ https://edo.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/news/GDO-EDODroughtNews202208_Europe.pdf

take account of the effects of climate change, objectively define each situation with regard to possible problems in meeting demands and automatically establish the management measures to be taken at each stage;

26. Calls for flood risk management plans to be drawn up on the basis of hazard and risk maps, including programmes of measures that take account of the effects of climate change;
27. Calls for the promotion of other measures to better address the consequences of climate change, such as restoring water bodies, modernising and making irrigation systems more efficient, increasing water security, promoting resource savings, the use of unconventional sources and the digitalisation of water management in order to improve knowledge and thereby ensure more efficient use of water;
28. Calls for all initiatives and actions related to the prevention and mitigation of droughts, heatwaves and their impacts to fully integrate consideration of the natural environment, notably forests, and biodiversity and ecosystem services;
29. Advocates for the management of natural and rural territories to target sustainability and resilience, particularly to forest fires; calls, moreover, for the strengthening of policies to support environmental stewardship and curb depopulation, especially the abandonment of agricultural land and traditional land uses (rain-fed crops, extensive grazing, forestry, etc.), and to encourage and provide sustained investment with plans to revitalise the rural environment, boost the bio-economy, pay for environmental services and restore ecosystems and green infrastructure;
30. Calls for the risk of forest fires to be taken into account in land-use planning and management policy, with particular consideration for the role of the urban-forestry interface in preventing and preparing for forest or rural fires. favours the promotion of spatial heterogeneity in the landscape as a preventive strategy to deal with fires, which can be achieved by promoting sustainable farm systems and other activities such as pastoralism, preventive forestry and mountain farming;
31. Calls for increased resources for the integrated management of the countryside and the natural and rural environment and sustainable forest management, with a fire prevention policy enabling the use of preventive low-intensity and controlled fires to burn undergrowth which acts as fuel in wild fires; notes that this should complement the continuous investment in and improvement of means of extinguishing fires, particularly in the Mediterranean countries,
32. Recommends that other sectoral policies (agriculture, rural development, infrastructure, spatial planning, tourism, employment, etc.) be more involved in forest fire risk management, as this is a global problem that requires responses from different actors and public policies covering a common area;
33. Urges the Commission and the Member States to ensure that forests are preserved, protected, restored, improved and used in an orderly manner; recognises the need to preserve the important social role of forests, both as a source of natural resources and as the providers of livelihoods through economic activities and of multiple environmental services, including soil protection and the hydrological cycle;

34. Calls for forest fire response devices to be adapted to new scenarios and to strengthen their cooperation in order to improve their synergies and integration in order to make them operational;
35. Recognises the particular vulnerability of Mediterranean countries and the importance of deploying specific mechanisms and resources to deal with the risks and effects of these extreme events in these territories;
36. Recalls that enhancing biodiversity, ecosystem services and green infrastructure in cities, rural and peri-urban areas improves human health; recalls that developing and implementing nature-based solutions for preserving biodiversity and incorporating and further integrating biodiversity and ecosystem functions in urban design, policy and planning can play an important role in mitigating and adapting to climate change in cities, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote these practices;
37. Draws attention to the fact that warmer and drier than usual conditions are still expected to occur in the Euro-Mediterranean region until November 2022. notes that some of the precipitation events in August and September brought damaging thunderstorms, causing further problems to various types of fruit and plantations, and that further such damage can be expected;
38. Notes that the drought, which is causing sharp reductions in European crop yields, adds to the already difficult situation faced by farmers as a result of the impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and that the combination of these factors means a further rise in agricultural product prices, contributing to a 20 % increase in the Consumer Price Index;
39. Underlines the need, in view of the extreme climate events of recent months, to implement the farm to fork and biodiversity strategies more swiftly in order to achieve more ambition for a greener and more sustainable agriculture sector with a more sustainable use of water resources by modernising irrigation systems, taking into account the climate impacts of certain kinds of production;
40. Highlights that agriculture has been affected by the drought in the following ways to date:
 - severe fall in the levels of major rivers, other waterways and water sources, as well as increasing salinity moving inland from river estuaries, leading to a lack of water for agriculture as well as other uses;
 - overall shortage of drinking water for livestock so animals cannot develop and thrive as normal;
 - lower volumes of forage being cut in the first part of the year due to a lack of rain and little or no grass growth for second cuts to be stocked to feed livestock in the winter months;
 - threats to the viability of many farms due to this scarcity of pasture and fresh grazing due to drought, with forage harvested earlier in the year for winter use being consumed now, making prohibitively high prices inevitable for fodder and alternative feed products;

- lower or later crop yields due to dry conditions including in the coming months if soil conditions remain dry in the autumn, with average yields estimated to be lower than in the previous year and the average for the last five years; this reduction is greatest in late harvest areas affected by the heatwave's highest intensity, which prevented grain from filling out properly close to harvest time;
 - heavy reductions in fruit yields, notably apples, pears and stone fruits, are forecast for some European regions;
 - abandonment of fields and production areas for fresh fruit and vegetables where insufficient water is available, critically affecting tomatoes destined for industrial processing, and rice production in particular;
 - hindering of the pollination of olive groves due to high temperatures in the May flowering period, along with other damage due to heavy rainfall events;
 - early harvesting of key crops such as vines due to high temperatures and lack of water damaging crop quality, highlighting the need to adapt working methods to extreme heat and sustained low rainfall;
 - beekeeping and honey production badly affected by shortened or absent flowering of melliferous plants, due to lack of rain and high temperatures in autumn and winter, and drought in some cases, and irregular and uneven rainfall in some regions in spring, with excessive heat in May;
 - loss of invertebrates in topsoil due to dryness, leading to worsened soil conditions for future planting;
 - increasing numbers of fires destroying crops and compromising soil quality on agricultural land;
 - risk of desertification and soil degradation throughout the EU and particularly in Mediterranean Member States where up to 250 000 hectares are at risk of desertification, impacting strategically important crops such as cereals or oilseed crops such as sunflower;
41. Calls on the Commission to fully assess the impacts of the continuing drought situation on EU food production in the current year, and on food supplies for the population over the coming winter; calls on the Commission and the Council, furthermore, to consider what remedial action can be taken and what support can be given to ensure that primary food producers suffering from production losses due to heat and drought damage can restart new cycles of production for essential food supplies without delay;
 42. Calls on the Commission to continue and intensify research into soil cover vegetation and crop types which are better adapted to high temperatures;
 43. Calls on the Commission additionally to identify financial resources to aid farms, compensating for the losses resulting from drought damage or other events caused by the climate emergency, to incentivise more climate resilience and sustainability and to ensure that this crisis does not end with definitive farm closures;
 44. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take long-term drought prevention and coping measures, including for water conservation, leakage prevention, the reuse of safe waste water, more efficient irrigation methods, more use of drought-tolerant forage,

crops and varieties for all types of production, and other more water-efficient alternatives methods of food production, and to consider the impact of unsustainably produced food imports from third countries;

45. Calls on Commission and the Member States to prioritise the creation of buffer stocks of strategic feed and foodstuffs as one means to mitigate the most damaging aspects of drought, including big yield variations year on year, and calls on the Commission to address this at international level by pursuing the establishment of food storage as one stabilising tool in the face of the impacts of climate change on agriculture and food supplies;
46. Calls on the Member States to consider extending the use of public climate insurance schemes, and on the Commission to promote exchanges of good practice on this and other mitigation measures;
47. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to keep CAP strategic plans under review in order to implement water-efficient management and long-term strategies for continual improvements in sustainability, water management, efficient irrigation and other uses of water in agriculture in the future;
48. Notes that some Member States are more vulnerable to climate change and its impacts, such as the southern and Mediterranean European countries, and that drought and other climate change phenomena have not only environment impacts, but also social, cultural, economic and political impacts, increasing the risk of deepening social inequalities;
49. Expresses the view that dealing with such an emergency requires more than targeted measures, and that it also requires a more consolidated and ambitious climate and energy policy in line with the Paris Agreement, which should deploy both mitigation and adaptation measures as climate change impacts become more frequent;
50. Is of the view of that to deal with such a crisis, national drought monitoring and management systems should be put in place with a particular focus on prevention, allowing for a timely and appropriate answer to climate change risks; stresses the need to monitor and anticipate drought effects, with the increasing occurrence of extreme temperature phenomena making it all the more necessary to increase and ensure preparedness for drought situations; considers, furthermore, that risk evaluation and management should be put in place, including a sector-by-sector analysis, and that such systems should be in line with the EU adaptation strategy and the national adaptation strategies, with a focus on disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness;
51. Underlines that close cooperation between stakeholders is needed, between local, regional and national authorities, but also local populations and civil society;
52. Calls on the Member-States to provide financial, monitoring and management support to deal with this emergency, namely by reducing non-essential water consumption while ensuring sufficient availability of water for human consumption as well for sufficient crop irrigation; stresses that more water efficiency should be promoted, ensuring zero waste and sufficient water storage for consumption and agriculture systems, including through funding of research and innovation programmes and pilot projects which promote the use of new technologies;

53. Stresses that coordinated action at European level is also needed in the area of research and monitoring, between already existing entities such as the European Drought Observatory, the European Environment Agency, the Copernicus Emergency Management Service and other appropriate stakeholders; stresses that in the area of funding, appropriate financial support should be identified in the context of the CAP, the national recovery and resilience plans and other regional funds;
54. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States. .