



# SCELG DIALOGUE

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## From Climate Strikes to Climate Solutions

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# From Climate Strikes to Climate Solutions

**Francesco Sindico**

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Last Friday I was in the streets in Glasgow as so many people around the world. Today I was in the class at the University of Strathclyde teaching the first session of the LLM class “International Climate Change Law”. Together with my students we discussed (or better brainstormed) how we can move from climate strikes to climate solutions. As you can imagine, we did not come up with a silver bullet that will make climate change go away, but we did start discussing something that I believe will be of great importance in the coming years.



But let's go back to basics before we raise that important issue. **Greta Thunberg** herself starts many of her speeches by referring to climate science and she maintains that “the scientists have told us for 30 years”, etc... Leaving aside the complexity of who these climate scientists may be (I for one refer to the IPCC when referring to climate science), one thing is for sure: climate science has advanced and several things are strikingly clear in 2019. First, climate

change is happening, it is anthropogenic and the main cause is the release of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Second, GHG emissions are attributable mainly to three main sectors: industry (and energy in particular), agriculture and land use, and transport. Third, there are ways (i.e. solutions) to reduce GHG emissions and, hence, combat climate change. Industry and energy can be made more efficient and fossil fuels can be replaced by greener sources of energy. Agriculture and land use can be made more efficient and afforestation and healthy oceans can be fostered as carbon sinks. Transport can be made more efficient and environmentally friendly together with better public transport. I am fully aware that climate change science and responses to climate change are much more complex than what just stated, but, for the purposes of this short piece, I stop here.

Let us now move back to last Friday and the climate strikes. I am sure I am not the only one who has been on a journey as to how they feel about them. I am still somewhat ambivalent on the use of the word strike, but I have definitely warmed up to it. The question is twofold:

- is the climate strike movement making a positive impact and how do we measure such impact? and, even more importantly,
- how do we move from climate strike to climate solutions?

Despite clear signals of the devastating effects of climate change around, we seem to have moved from climate scepticism to climate indifference over the past few years. It is difficult to see how climate solutions can flourish in a world of climate indifference. If there is one thing that the climate strike movement has achieved it is to tackle heads on climate indifference. This is a major win! And one that needs to be understood, studied, but especially harnessed. And this is the main question I posed to my students today: How do we harness the momentum of the climate strikes in order to move towards climate solutions? We only have 10 years to develop and implement such solutions (many of which are already there), so there really is not too much time to even pose this question, but it is an important (possibly even crucial) question.

So, how do we harness the global momentum stemming from the climate strike movement and channel it into climate change solutions? There is no doubt that there is momentum and that it is global! When was the last time that people around the world all came out at the same time for the same cause? And, especially, when was the last time that so many children and youth marched for the same cause? Clearly something special is happening, something many people do not understand and do not like.

While shying away from giving an answer to the question I posed to my students, I did reflect on the final message in a **video from Greta Thunberg and George Monbiot** where they encourage people to vote. I do not see that as necessarily a plea to vote for a specific political party, but as a plea to be “political”. It is easy to march on the streets and, theoretically, it is also easy to come up every four years (or more) and vote. However, in many countries (also those where people have the opportunity to vote) many people do not turn up. Hence, the first way to harness the momentum stemming from the climate strike is to vote. However, climate change raises existential and systematic questions about the world we live in. While voting is not just a good start, but a necessity, it’s also not enough. There needs to be a discussion about a new political system that understands the societal challenge we face with climate change and acts around it. I do not know what the contours of such discussion should be, but maybe that is where the challenge lies in the coming year. We need to move from climate strikes to climate solutions by opening up a political discussion about the political system we live in, and will and want to live in the future. With this in mind let me conclude by answering the two key questions that the climate strikes are raising all around the world:

- Is the climate strike movement making a positive impact and how do we measure such impact?

*The climate strike is making a positive impact by tackling heads on climate indifference.*

- How do we move from climate strike to climate solutions?

*First, we need to go out and vote. Second, we all need to be more “political” and open and contribute to political discussions about the system we live in and the system we want to live in the future.*

In conclusion, one last observation I made to my students is that when we think of voting we are thinking of domestic and national politics. That is at odds with climate change, which is truly a global problem. I am not saying that what is decided at national level is irrelevant, but solutions to climate change will only be effective if taken and implemented at a global level. What this means is that, even from a legal perspective, although we may feel that the international climate change legal regime is not moving fast enough, we still need to work hard on it and understand how the Paris Agreement itself can benefit from the momentum of the climate strikes. Living and working in Glasgow and at the University of Strathclyde COP26 presents me and my students with a unique opportunity to engage in the questions above and to make sure we start playing our part in the important decade ahead.

**This SCELG Dialogue can also be found on LinkedIn at:**

**<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/from-climate-strikes-solutions-francesco-sindico/?published=t>**

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**SCELG Policy Briefs**

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M Geelhoed, Response to the Public Consultation 'Good Food Nation Proposals for Legislation', SCELG Policy Brief 10/2019

**SCELG Dialogues**

I Ofor and J Gibson, What can Lawyers do for Animals? Education in and Practice of Animal Law in Scotland – Event Report, SCELG Dialogue 9/2018

I Ofor, Animal Welfare, Bilateral Trade Agreements, and Sustainable Development Goal Two, SCELG Dialogue 8/2019

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