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Conference conclusions

Climate adaptation: a final reconciliation between man and nature or doomsday clock?

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- 1) Climate adaptation is a binding duty, included in international treaties, EU law, human rights law, and national legislation, and will remain a policy priority, even in times of climate populism. Yet, its enforcement through lawsuits, even when the causality is proved, might face challenges considering the lack of strict legal and objective benchmarks.
- 2) Climate adaptation is a cross-cutting societal challenge, impacting every sector and all layers of society (land use, forestry, agriculture, industry, recreation) but will inevitably also permeate every subsection of the law and could require a complete rethink of the key tenets of our legal order (e.g. property rights, insurance, land use-plans,...).
- 3) Climate mitigation and climate adaptation are not mutually exclusive. We should do both at the same time. However, the clear focus should be on win-win and synergies, such as nature restoration and renewable energies.
- 4) Science should feed into every aspect of climate adaptation and constitute the logical benchmark for the next generation of adaptation strategies. Yet it will not provide definitive answers and thus obliges a continuous adaptive management of climate risks.

5) Climate adaptation should trickle down to the local level, amongst others by its integration into SEA and EIAs, but cannot be solved at the national or local level (alone) and therefore, requires continuous investments in transboundary and multilayered solutions (which has become less popular in these geopolitical times, where the right of the strongest seems to prevail – yet even the strongest are not completely safe from the impacts of climate change).

6) The law will not save us from climate destruction alone and thus we should move beyond the 'public planning duty', which puts the focus on the formal duty for authorities to draft adaptation plans, recognizing the important but modest role of the law and the vital importance of environmental awareness, education, and environmental democracy.

7) Technological solutions and classic defences (dykes, locks...) are important to protect people in the next decades, yet in the long-term only nature-based solutions will be crucial to save us from climate-fuelled destruction.

