

Greta Thunberg slams 'wasted decades' of climate change denial

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News

Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg has condemned "wasted decades of denial" by political leaders on the issue of climate change.



Greta Thunberg | *Photo credit: Press Association*

Speaking in Brussels on Thursday, the teenage activist said, "We need to protect the biosphere, the air, the oceans, the soil, the forests."

The 16-year-old made it clear that it was imperative to take immediate action against climate change.

Addressing a European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) conference she said, "Our political leaders have wasted decades through denial and inaction. Not only do we need new policies, we also

need a whole new way of thinking."

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She told a packed Brussels audience, "Our political system is all about competition: you cheat when you can, because all you want to get is power."

"This must change. We just want politicians to listen to the scientists".

Citing data from the latest United Nations reports, she warned that our planet was only 11 years away from an irreversible situation.

"We are not fighting for the future of young generations only; we are fighting for everybody's future. We have started to clean up this mess and we will not stop until we are done," she said to loud applause.

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The meeting discussed the role that organised civil society can play for the future of Europe.

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The event, just over 90 days from the European elections, brought together representatives of the European institutions and civil society organisations from across the EU.

EESC President, Luca Jahier, referring to growing Euroscepticism, xenophobia and racism across Europe, said that democracy was under attack and that European values were being questioned.

"This is not the time for resignation, it is the time to dream and to dare," he declared, adding, "Whatever it takes, we will dare a sustainable Europe"

European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, congratulated the movement against climate change put together by Thunberg because, he said "it can bring about change, it has spread to many cities and now there is a common message in the streets of Europe."

He also highlighted the vital contribution of the EU to this fight, saying, "In 2014 the economic situation of Europe was at a dead end, so we launched a large investment plan and the majority of these investments went towards the environment."

He said the Paris agreement remains a cornerstone in the action against climate change, although

"some people think that climate change is invented, a sort of an ideological concept."

"It [the climate change movement] can bring about change, it has spread to many cities and now there is a common message in the streets of Europe" **Jean-Claude Juncker**

Further comment came from the President of the European Committee of the Regions, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, who acknowledged that the event marked "the common will to work together for our Union."

Borrowing the EESC President's mandate motto, "rEUnaissance - Dare a sustainable Europe," he maintained that "we talk about the same thing, that is rebuilding the Union."

"We need to be concrete to avoid frustration, because unkept promises are always devastating. Our citizens and regions are still the uncharted territory of our democracies. We need to fully involve them in the European construction."

"The Union can only be reborn from the desire of Europeans," he added.

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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