László Andor, a former European commissioner, has called for urgent action to address a “climate emergency.”

Speaking exclusively to this magazine, he said recent emergencies like the Amazon forest fires and floods in Europe showed that the issue had moved beyond a crisis to an emergency.

He also condemned political leaders, including President Trump, for “denying what science is telling us about climate change.”

The US decision to pull-out of the Paris climate agreement was, he said, a “high risk” move, adding, “I hope that, as a very minimum, the Americans will recommit to the Paris Agreement because without
US participation proper progress on this is not possible. This would be the least they can do because some say Paris is still insufficient.”

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Andor served as employment and social affairs commissioner in the second commission of José Manuel Barroso and is now secretary-general of FEPS, the Foundation for European Policy Studies, a thinktank associated with the Party of European Socialists.

FEPS is organising a conference on “climate justice” on Friday on the fringes of the annual UN General Assembly in New York.

Andor will join other speakers, including former Irish president Mary Robinson and former UK Labour party leader Ed Miliband, in “making the case that the climate emergency is happening now and must be urgently addressed.”

Speaking on Wednesday, just ahead of the FEPS two-day conference, he said he also “fully supports” a “global climate strike”, scheduled for this Friday to coincide with the UN meeting.

Andor, who left the European commission five years ago, told The Parliament Magazine, “We face a climate emergency but not everyone is taking this as seriously as they should. Some, such as President Trump, still seem to be in denial despite what science is telling us about the climate.”

Donald Trump is among those who are still openly sceptical of the science behind global warming.

“We face a climate emergency but not everyone is taking this as seriously as they should. Some, such as President Trump, still seem to be in denial despite what science is telling us about the climate”

This attitude, Andor noted, was in stark contrast to the Europeans who have “shown leadership” on the climate issue which he believes has been “reinforced” by the incoming new commission, led by Ursula von der Leyen.

Andor said, “It seems the new commission will be taking the issue more seriously than the last one did. A good sign is that the new commission agenda will now be linked to the SDGs.”

This is a “major step forward” and will help the EU “restore its leadership” in the climate field.

He said that the outgoing Jean-Claude Juncker commission had “downgraded” the issue by merging certain directorates in the executive including climate and environment.
Among the urgent action needed, he said, is the phasing out of coal subsidies, describing it as “very important” as it could “speed up” the ending of the production and use of fossil fuels.

“We also hear a lot about ‘greening’ the European Investment Bank,” he said, adding, “but this needs a further boost to help, for instance, the car industry adapt to technological change.”

“The signals coming out of the new commission are very good, but it is early days.”

He also praised a group of young activists, including Greta Thunberg, for their “admirable leadership” on climate issues, saying “you sometimes need a messenger like her to get the message across.”

The 16-year-old Swedish activist has joined young people across the world to strike for more action to combat the impact of global warming and was one of several youth activists invited to address a climate task force in the US Senate this week, during two days of action and speeches aimed at urging lawmakers to support “transformative climate action”.

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The meetings and speeches in Washington were intended to raise awareness ahead of the global climate strike on Friday in which students and workers have been asked to walk out of schools and offices to pressure their governments to act.

Thunberg arrived in the US for the UN general assembly after crossing the Atlantic on a solar-powered yacht. She rose to international prominence after launching “Fridays for Future”: student-led strikes that have spread to 135 countries. She has been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize.

Andor pointed out that FEPS has called for the creation of “youth climate councils” which would allow people like Thunberg to take part in decision making about climate policies.

The current crisis in the Amazon was, he said, an example of the urgency needed at a global level, adding, “but even without the current tragedy in the Amazon they would still be a very pressing urgency.”

He noted that it “is always the most vulnerable and weakest” who were most at risk of climate change and that migration flows, including to the EU, were “aggravated” by rapid changes in the climate.

FEPS has, he said, drafted a policy document, “United for Climate Justice” which says that climate change has resulted in a “triple injustice”, hitting hardest the countries least responsible for climate change, disproportionally impacting the poor and leaving a “legacy of risks and hardships” for future generations.

The document, with five “guiding proposals for climate justice”, will be debated at the FEPS conference in New York.

**About the author**

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