

## COVID-19 and Climate Change: Lessons and Challenges

Speaker: **Joëlle Noailly**, Head of Centre for International Environmental Studies, The Graduate Institute, Geneva, Switzerland

On April 16th, Joëlle Noailly, Head of the Centre for International Environmental Studies (CIES), presented an e-seminar on the impact of COVID-19 on climate change.

At first, we would think that the low economic activity and the drastic decrease in CO2 emissions would be positive for the environment. Prof. Joëlle Noailly emphasizes the impact on carbon accountability. With the recession underway, the price of carbon in the quota trading system, the main mechanism for regulating corporate emissions in the European Union and Switzerland, is collapsing. She claims that: "The demand to pollute is falling sharply. As a result, the price per tonne of carbon went from 25 euros in early March to just 15 euros today. With such a low price, companies have no incentive to innovate or find alternative solutions."

She underlines that the current level of emissions has dropped but only temporarily. Countries will have to adopt new measures following the crisis to boost the economy. It has an unprecedented impact on governments from a national and international level. At a national level, the upcoming economic crisis would be at the forefront of national agendas, leaving behind the fight for climate change. This means that governments will support fossil fuels and airline industries to boost the economy. Consequently, the post-crisis usual situation would also lead to an increase in emission. This would also mean that directly after the

health crisis, individuals would tend to use more emissions. Adding to that, most of international conferences, such as COP26, have been rescheduled to 2021 which delays the Paris Agreement objectives.

After the crisis, there is a fear that people will return to their consumption and travelling habits. However, this crisis can also be an opportunity to change mentality from an individual, national and global levels. This would greatly depend on the various policies following the health crisis but public opinion can have a great impact on them.

### About the Centre for International Environmental Studies

- Established in 2010, the Centre for International Environmental Studies (CIES) is the Graduate Institute's focal point for research on environmental issues. The centre is dedicated to the better understanding of the social, legal, economic and political facets of global problems related to the environment, with an emphasis on the international dimension and the North-South relations.
- The centre addresses complex problems such as climate change, biodiversity, food security, energy, natural resources and development. CIES's mission is to conduct high level academic research to improve the quality of decision making in public and private spheres. This goal is achieved by creating a platform for researchers to conduct interdisciplinary research on the environment, by providing training to PhD students in specialized areas of research and by disseminating research results through outreach activities targeted to academic experts and policymakers.
- CIES is part of a number of academic networks and partners with academic institutions and stakeholders throughout the world. Located in the heart of International Geneva, CIES regularly hosts workshops and conferences that bring together researchers and policy-makers.