

Speech by Hans van Dijk, Grootouders voor het Klimaat at Hague Talks organized by The Hague Humanity Hub, 24 October 2021.

Tonight, I like to address the younger generations.

I like to make three points:

- one point about solidarity,
- one about responsibility, and
- one about human rights.

Speaking of solidarity, I would like to thank the young people for the way in which they - in general- made a huge effort to keep the elderly safe during the Covid crisis.

The T-shirt I am wearing is all about solidarity.

It expresses how the young and the old can mutually respect each other's interest.

We want to keep you safe and thank you for keeping us safe.

You, the young, had to restrain yourself, could not go out and meet each other.

Despite your overwhelming use of digital tools and media you could get isolated and even feel depressed.

Luckily, young people are resilient, and you will recover from the COVID period.

In return you may ask from us that we do not only look for our own best interest, but also take your future into account.

Climate change has huge implications. Already at present, but more so in future. I personally will not witness the consequences of a lifestyle that I - and you - have grown accustomed to.

It is not sustainable to keep up a comfortable lifestyle that uses up resources to the amount of three times what the earth can provide.

We have to reduce our ecological footprint.

We have to learn to restrain our consumption.

Not only solidarity between generations is required. Also, solidarity between the haves and the have nots. Both within wealthy countries as well as between rich countries and low-income countries. The West has a huge historical responsibility for the climate crisis.

The second point is about responsibility.

I do not feel guilty about the life I have lived so far. But I do feel responsible.

Responding to the court ruling that Shell has a responsibility concerning CO2 emissions, Jeroen van der Veer, former CEO of Shell, the oil company, said that they are not a signatory to the Treaty of Paris. And that they only respond to the demand of the costumers.

To me that sounds like the logic of a drugs dealer.

The oil, gas, and coal sector has a specific – and enormous - responsibility for the climate crisis **and should acknowledge that.**

Instead of his defensive response, Van der Veer could have said: 'We at Shell accept our specific responsibility and we call for the sector to come together at a side-conference in Glasgow during the COP26 to come to an agreement to reduce the extraction of fossil resources and to switch to becoming sustainable energy companies **as soon as possible.**'

Which legal instruments can be put in place to force the fossil energy sector to stop drilling and pumping?

My third point is about human rights. The appeal Grootouders makes is a moral one.

For the sake of our grandchildren we - the elderly- need to change our behavior.

In Dutch we say *De jeugd heeft de toekomst*. The future belongs to the youth.

But we must move away from just the moral appeal. We need to establish tools to give a voice to the ones that don't have a voice yet. The children and the future generations.

In Dutch: *een stem geven aan degenen die nog geen stem hebben*.

I propose to introduce a *future generations test*. Legislation needs to be legally reviewed against the consequences for the people without a voice. To protect their human rights.

This idea of a *generatietoets* was proposed by the Dutch Jonge Klimaat Beweging.

In the Netherlands de Raad van State reviews the climate policy of the government against the consequences it has for the realization of the aims of the Dutch Climate Act. Zero emissions by 2050 and 55 percent reduction by 2030.

You could imagine that **all** laws are reviewed against the consequences they have for future generations. Would this be a role for a Climate Authority? For the Raad van State? For the Hoge Raad? We propose the Constitution to be the basis for the review. At present this is not possible. The authority, council or court should be advised by experts. In the Netherlands by the Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving, the PBL.

In other countries - where they have it - the Constitutional Court or Supreme Court could take the reviewers' role.

By the way: isn't it strange that in the Netherlands we don't have a **Climate** Outbreak Management Team, like the one we have for the COVID crisis? A team of scientists appointed to advise the government on the measures to be taken.

The lack of a Climate OMT can only be explained if the climate crisis is not considered to be a real crisis. Politicians lack a sense of urgency when it comes to the "Climate Disaster", as Sigrid Kaag called it.

I propose that the younger generations demand that a legal *future generations test* is introduced, both nationally in the Netherlands as well as internationally, possibly during the COP26.

A moral appeal is not sufficient anymore. To force the generations with political and economic power, the young have to demand for a legal instrument.

**You have to fight for your right.**