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**Statement of scientists and scholars concerning the protests for more climate protection**

## **The concerns of the young protesters are justified**

At present, many young people have begun to demonstrate persistently for climate protection and the preservation of our natural resources. As scientists and scholars, and based on sound scientific knowledge, we declare: **These concerns are justified and supported by the best available science. The current measures for climate, biodiversity, forest, marine, and soil protection are far from sufficient.**

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change of 2015 obliges nation states under international law to keep **global warming well below 2°C**. In addition, all countries have promised **efforts to limit global warming to 1.5 °C**.

It is critical to immediately begin reducing net CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and to eliminate them to zero worldwide between 2040 and 2050 at the latest. A more rapid reduction increases the probability of reaching 1.5°C. The burning of coal should be nearly ended by 2030, while the burning of oil and natural gas should be reduced simultaneously until all fossil fuels have been replaced by climate-neutral energy sources. Considering global climate justice, in Europe this change has to take place even more quickly.

While the need for participation and discussion remains, action must be taken now. Discussion and action are not mutually exclusive. Many social and technological innovations already exist which can maintain quality of life and improve human well-being without destroying our natural resources.

In all **German-speaking countries**, neither necessary scale nor speed are being achieved in the restructuring of the energy, food, agriculture, resource, and mobility sectors. **Germany** will fail to meet the climate protection targets it has set itself for 2020, and the achievement of the goals of the German Sustainability Strategy for 2030 is at high risk. Moreover, there is still a lack of an effective climate protection law. **Austria** has set itself goals in its climate and energy strategy that do not in any way do justice to the Paris Agreement and even for this purpose neither the necessary measures nor the financial means are provided. At the same time, soil degradation and surface coverage per person and year in Austria are the highest in Europe. **Switzerland** has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions only slightly since 1990; at the same time, emissions caused abroad have increased considerably. In the first parliamentary debate on the total revision of the CO<sub>2</sub> Act, domestic reduction targets were abolished and Swiss emissions were to be reduced by offsetting them abroad. In the end, the law failed for the time being.

The young people rightly demand that our society should prioritize sustainability and especially climate action without further hesitation. Without far-reaching and consistent change, their future is in danger. This change means, among other things: With new courage and the necessary speed, we will introduce renewable energy sources. We will consistently implement energy-saving measures. And, we will fundamentally change our patterns of nutrition, mobility and consumption.



Politicians in particular have a responsibility to create the necessary framework conditions in a timely manner. In particular, climate-friendly and sustainable action must become simple and cost-effective, while climate-damaging action must become unattractive and expensive (e. g., through effective CO2 prices, cessation of subsidies for climate-damaging actions and products, efficiency regulations and social innovations). A socially balanced distribution of the costs and benefits of change is essential.

The enormous mobilisation of the Fridays for Future/Climate Strike movement shows that young people have understood the situation. As scientists and scholars, we emphatically approve their demand for rapid and forceful action.

As people who are familiar with scientific work and who are concerned about the current developments, we see it as our social responsibility to point out the consequences of inadequate action.

**Only if we act quickly and consistently can we limit global warming, halt the mass extinction of animal and plant species, preserve the natural basis for life and create a future worth living for present and future generations. This is exactly what the young people of Fridays for Future/Climate Strike want to achieve. They deserve our respect and full support.**

***Some of the leading signatories in Austria in the field of climate & sustainability research include:*** Prof. Dr. Ulrich Brand, Prof. Dr. Martin H. Gerzabek, Dr. Hans-Peter Hutter, Prof. Dr. Georg Kaser, Prof. Dr. Gottfried Kirchengast (Ö. Koord.), Prof. Dr. Helga Kromp-Kolb (Ö. Koord.), Prof. Dr. Reinhold Lang, Prof. Dr. Lukas Meyer, Prof. Dr. Nebojsa Nakicenovic, Prof. Dr. Franz Rauch, Prof. Dr. Renée Schröder, Prof. Dr. Eva Schulev-Steindl, Prof. Dr. Sigrid Stagl, Dr. Michael Staudinger, Prof. Dr. Karl Steininger, Prof. Dr. Klement Tockner, Dr. Isabella Uhl-Hädicke, Prof. Dr. Verena Winiwarter