

## **Bringing the Voice of the People into Global Climate Governance: The World Wide Views on Climate and Energy**

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### **Introduction**

Urgent global issues such as climate change and the security of energy supplies are discussed and negotiated by heads of state and government leaders at the international level. Major interest groups like NGOs, business groups, and experts also have access to the negotiations. In this constellation, however, the main addressee of the policies is missing: Citizens have in general no access to the negotiation table, although they are the one affected by the policy outcomes.

In the area of climate change, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted in 1992, defines the process of annual climate negotiations. At these Conferences of the Parties (COP), representatives of all 197 state parties discuss and decide on global climate policy. Many stakeholders have access to the negotiations to some extent or can contact delegates. In addition to representatives of research and business, large and internationally networked environmental and conservation organizations are also present. Non-organized civil society, that is, the vast majority of citizens who do not belong to such organizations, could not contribute to the negotiation process and thus global decisions on climate action until now.

World Wide Views (WWViews) aims at creating a possibility to invite the non-organized civil society in the negotiation arena.<sup>1</sup> The process relies on five core methodological principles:

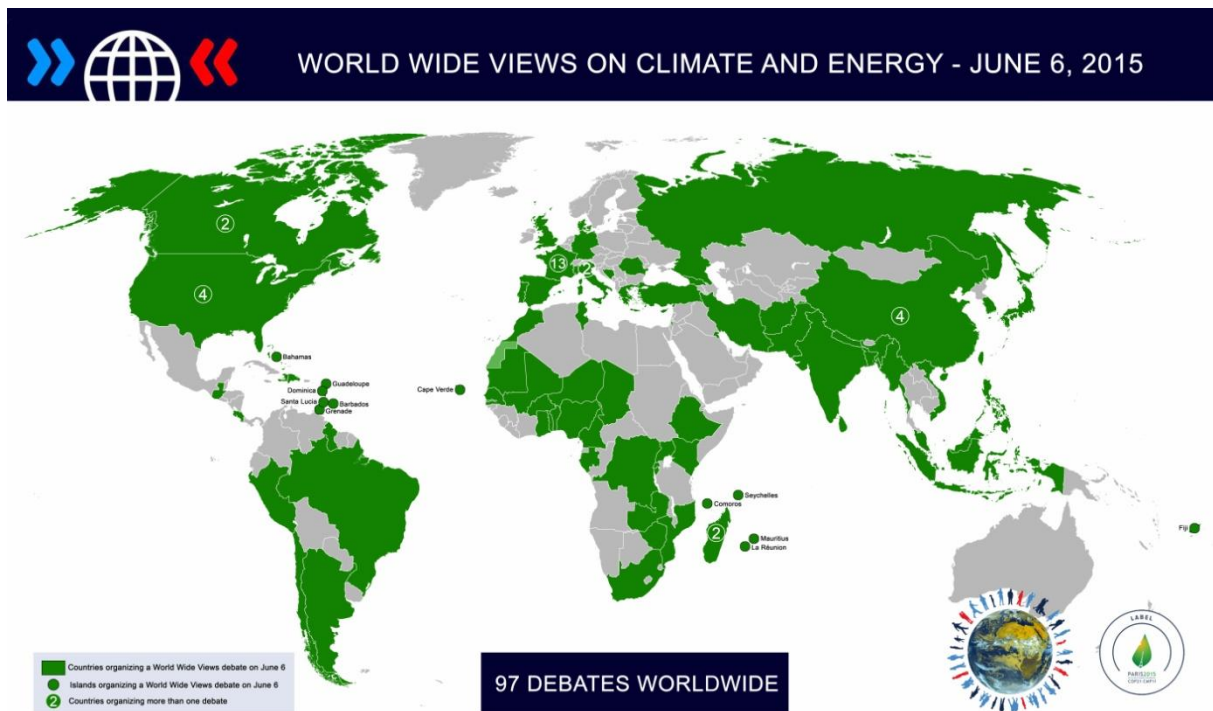
1. Cheap and easy: The method should be low-tech and cheap enough in order to be available for each and every country of the world.
2. Inclusion: The aim is to involve the citizens of the world in their diversity. This is why WWViews is based on meetings of groups of 100 citizens chosen to represent the diversity of their country.
3. Information: In order for the participants to be able to form an opinion on the topics discussed, they receive balanced information prior to the meeting.
4. Deliberation: Participants should have the time to exchange views and arguments with their fellow citizens before voting in order to consolidate their opinion.
5. Dissemination: The results are to be made comparable and public and are to be brought to the attention of policy-makers.

World Wide Views on Climate and Energy 2015 was initiated by Missions Publiques and co-coordinated by Missions Publiques, The Danish Board of Technologies, the French *Commission Nationale du débat public* and co-initiated by UNFCCC Secretary. It has been the largest ever global citi-

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<sup>1</sup> For more information and research results on previous editions see: Worthington, Richard (Ed.), *Citizen Participation in Global Environmental Governance*, Routledge, 2011; Rask, Mikko and Worthington, Richard (Eds.): *Governing Biodiversity Through Democratic Deliberation*, Routledge, 2015; and Stevenson, Hayley and Dryzek, John (Eds.): *Democratizing Global Climate Governance*, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

zen consultation. On June 6, 2015 in a total of 76 countries, 10,000 citizens participated in 97 debates<sup>2</sup> and gave their opinions on the key issues of the global climate talks around COP21 and the Paris Agreement.



1: Map of participating countries

This paper elaborates on the specific assets of the method and explores if WWViews is a suitable tool for engaging citizens even in complex issues like questions of global justice and Climate change. In the following section, we shortly present the method used in the WWViews citizen consultations. After that, we discuss some of the results of WWViews on Climate and Energy. Next, we argue that the method can be used to add a participatory element to international negotiation processes. Lastly, we share our assessment of how the WWViews can be further optimized and thus be utilized as a tool for future citizen participation projects, especially in the frame of the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

### Method

A standardized procedure has emerged with WWViews to give citizens a voice in major international negotiations, and it is, in principle, applicable to any relevant topic. The cornerstone of the process are local citizen dialogues in participating countries, which all take place on the same day. A country can host more than one group of citizens. Around 100 participants at each site are chosen to reflect the diversity of the people in the country or region; in particular, they should represent the distribution of the total population in terms of gender, age, education and occupation. When selecting the participating citizens, it is also important to ensure that laypeople and non-experts are included and

<sup>2</sup> A list of all partners in the participating countries is available at <http://climateandenergy.worldviews.org/national-and-regional-partners/>

that activists and experts are excluded. The idea is that people from many different backgrounds come together in order to engage in a dialogue and foster a process of collective Intelligence.

Typically, the day-long events start with a welcome by the organizers and motivational statements by politicians or representatives from the relevant ministries or authorities. Then, several rounds of discussions in small groups are held. Each round starts with a 5-to-10-minute information video that summarizes the key facts about each topic and also presents diverging viewpoints on the issue at stake. A brochure containing more background information is also sent to the participants a few days in advance. On this basis, the discussions in small groups start with 5 to 7 participants each. The group size is designed to bring a variety of different opinions together but also to permit each and every person to contribute productively to the discussion. The discussions are led by a facilitator who does not contribute additional information or any personal opinions. After each topic, ballots are handed out to the citizens. Voting issues of each ballot relate thematically to the respective discussion, and the participants can choose from multiple options for every question. Once citizens have filled out their voting sheets, they are collected for counting, and the results are directly recorded with the help of an online tool that collects the results of all participating countries. After all ballot sheets from one round are counted, the results are published instantaneously on the Internet. For WWViews 2015, discussions were structured around five broad themes:

1. Importance of tackling climate change
2. Tools to tackle climate change
3. UN negotiations and national commitments
4. Fairness and distribution of efforts
5. Making and keeping climate promises

In some countries, the organizers decided to add an additional topic. For example, at the event in Berlin, Germany, citizens were asked two open questions as part of a sixth work session. Participants were given the chance to give their input concerning what the citizens could contribute to climate action (question 1) and what they wanted their government to do in that regard (question 2).

As this approach to citizen participation is truly global in nature, a division of labor between the international coordination of the process and the various local partners is needed. The tasks of the international coordination include the development of the materials needed for the citizen dialogues, e.g. the information material for the participants and the questions. For WWViews on Climate and Energy 2015, the international coordination (Missions Publiques and Danish Board of Technology) consulted with a large number of stakeholders and decision-makers in the area of international climate policy as well as experts in the scientific community. Thus, the accuracy and the relevance of the information given to the participants and the topics to be discussed were ensured. Another crucial task of the coordinators was to recruit, train, and support the local partners.

The local partners were responsible for the preparation of the events in their countries or regions, including the translation of the information materials into the local languages, the recruitment of participants, and the implementation of the citizen dialogue on the specified date. Local organizers were given guidelines for organizing and carrying out the citizen dialogues; however, as circumstances vary widely from country to country, local partners were given some leeway for making decisions. The international coordination made sure that partners were always given advice when needed and

that there were several occasions where the partners could communicate among themselves about challenges and possible solutions.

The tasks of dissemination and communication of results was shared between the international coordination and the local partners. The results were prepared by Missions Publiques and the Danish Board of Technology and presented at the international level, for example at the preliminary negotiations in Bonn and alongside the UN General Assembly in New York. As all results had continuously been made available on the Internet on the day of the citizen consultations, raw results of the process could be used immediately after the last vote was cast<sup>3</sup>. Thus, representatives from the international coordination were able to present results and their preliminary interpretation at the pre-COP negotiations in Bonn only two days after June 6<sup>th</sup>. Meanwhile, local partners presented and spread the results of their national consultation and the global outcome in their country, particularly to national decision-makers.

The dissemination work of the partners does not only seek to create a dialogue with policy-makers but also aims at reaching out to the media. The results produced by the WWViews process can be used to provide additional viewpoints in the national and international debates besides those voiced by media-savvy politicians and other stakeholders. WWViews was largely present in media and social media all over the world.

### **World Wide Views is Suitable to Engage Citizens: Some results**

WWViews on Climate and Energy produced some remarkable results that have been condensed into twelve key findings that are presented below.<sup>4</sup>

#### A Strong Call for Action

1. Citizens worldwide want their leaders to commit to ambitious climate action
2. Citizens want zero emissions by the end of the century
3. The COP21 Paris Agreement needs to open a credible path to limit global warming to no more than 2°C
4. Climate change is an opportunity to improve life quality
5. Introduce carbon taxes and invest in renewable energy

#### Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities

6. The 'North-South' gap is closing
7. Countries should assume responsibilities based on their respective capabilities and emission levels
8. All countries must take action to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions

#### Financing Climate Action

9. The private sector should contribute significantly to climate finance
10. High-income countries should scale up their climate finance commitments

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<sup>3</sup> Results are still online and can be compared and studied online or downloaded for more complex data-analysis: <http://climateandenergy.wwviews.org/results/>

<sup>4</sup> These key results are all presented in more detail in the results report of WWViews: <http://climateandenergy.wwviews.org/publications/>

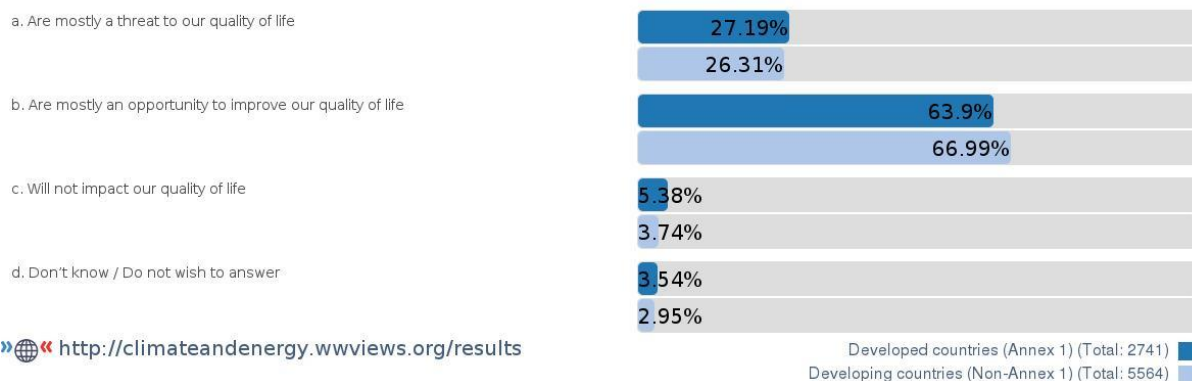
## Citizen Participation

11. Citizens want to take an active part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions
12. Citizens expect to take part in deciding on climate policies

These results show that the method is suitable to involve non-organized citizens in a discussion on complex topics. They are able to take positions on the issues at stake. They are both ambitious (e.g. 79% of participants want their government to enact policies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions even if other countries do not take action) and aware of the challenge of tackling climate change in terms of global justice. Indeed, many of the questions discussed by the citizens involved issues of global justice.

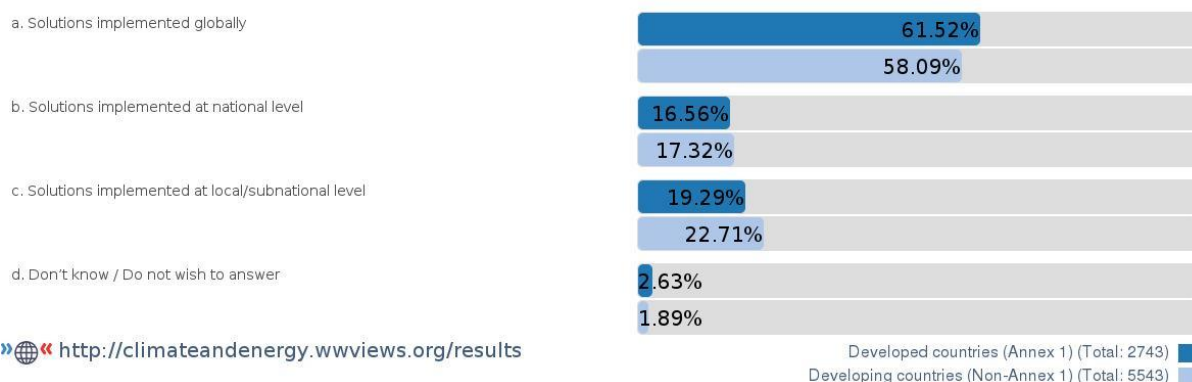
It is noteworthy that, in general, we observe relatively small differences in the voting behavior of participants from developed countries (Annex I) and developing countries (non-Annex I) of 4.2 percentage points on average. For example, citizens were asked how climate action measures would affect their quality of life. In both groups of countries, about two-thirds of participants saw actions for climate mitigation and adaptation as opportunities to enhance their quality of life. Only about a quarter thought of such measures as threats to their quality of life.

### 2. For you, measures to fight climate change:



Similarly, there is a high degree of agreement when citizens were asked which level of government they thought would be most effective in dealing with climate change. About 60% of participants preferred globally implemented measures, 17% thought that the national governments would be best suited for this task, and 20% wanted local or other sub-national authorities to take the lead.

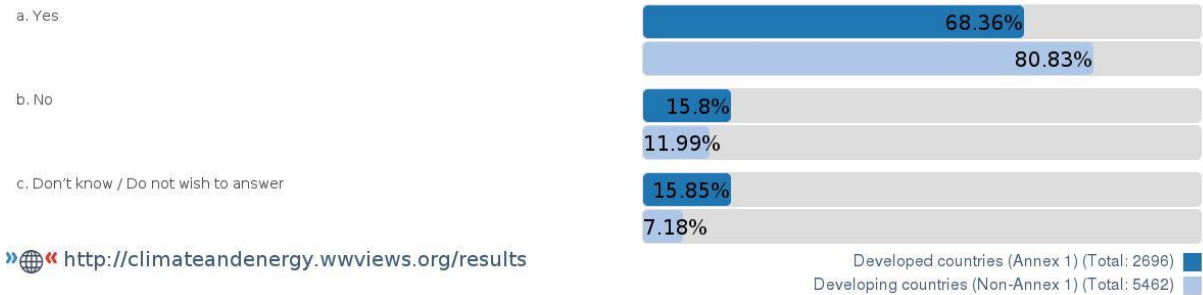
### 3. In order to deal with climate change what do you think will be most effective?



In contrast, there are some questions where the participants' answers diverged to a larger extent. Many of them dealt with burden sharing and other issues directly related to equity and global justice. Among the questions that produced the largest divergence in opinion as expressed by the participants' voting behavior were the following that dealt with the issues of the funding of climate action in developing countries, the categorization of richer developing countries, and the inspection of individual countries' climate mitigation and adaptation measures.

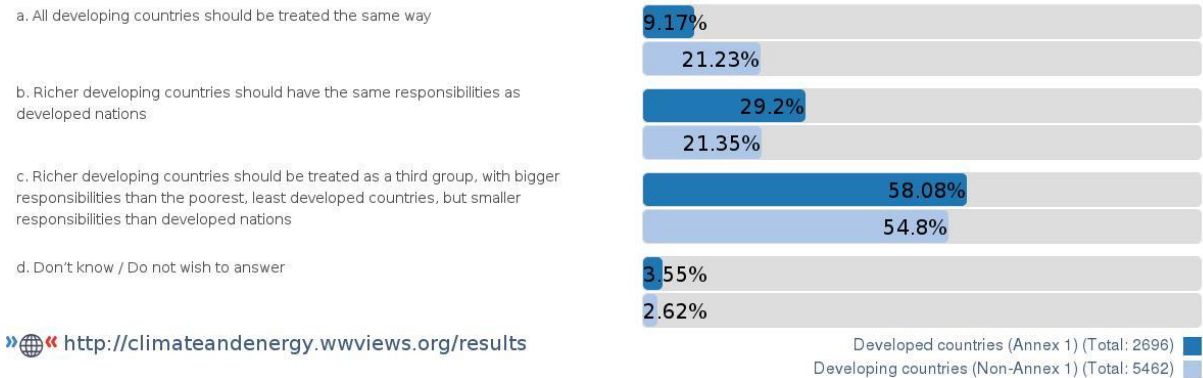
The WWViews participants were asked whether they agreed that rich countries should step up their pledges for funding mitigation and adaptation measures in developing countries. While there were majorities agreeing in both high-income and low-income countries, participants in developing countries, i.e. those countries that would supposedly receive the funds, were more likely to agree than participants from developed countries.

2. After 2020, should high-income countries pay more than already agreed on for mitigation and adaptation in low-income countries (\$100 billion in 2020)?



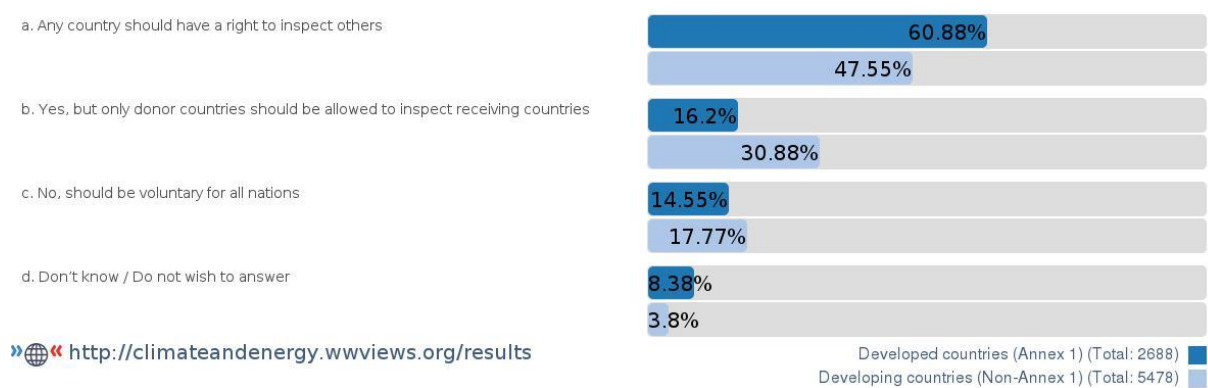
Another question involved the issue of whether richer developing countries (“emerging markets”) should further be treated as other developing countries. Put differently, the question was whether citizens wanted to hold on to the categorization of countries as codified in the Framework Convention. More than half of all participants in both Annex I and non-Annex I countries said that richer developing countries should form a new group with intermediate responsibilities, i.e. fewer responsibilities than the rich countries but more than developing countries. In the non-Annex I countries, the other half of participants were split equally into groups that either advocated for the status quo or wanted to give the emerging markets countries the same responsibilities as rich countries. The participants from Annex I countries, in contrast, were much more likely to call for emerging markets being given the same responsibilities as the developed countries.

4. Should all developing countries be treated as one group, as presently, or should richer developing countries have to do more?



The question of whether countries should be given the right to examine the climate actions of other countries produced some intriguing results. The statement that every country should have the right to inspect any other country received a clear majority in the developed countries but slightly less than half of the votes in the developing countries. Interestingly, twice as many participants from non-Annex I countries as their counterparts in the Annex I countries thought that only donor countries should be able to inspect receiving countries. Thus, significantly more participants from the countries that would supposedly receive funding agreed to this statement than participants from countries that would presumably provide these funds.

**3. Do you think that countries should have the right to inspect each other's reporting of mitigation and adaptation efforts?**



These results illustrate that there is generally high agreement between the positions taken by citizens in the developing countries and in the developed countries. Nevertheless, there are divergences, especially in the area of burden sharing and funding. Notwithstanding these divergences, we do not observe any disagreements in the form that one group of countries advocate diametrically opposite viewpoints. Going back to one of the examples above, a smaller percentage of participants in high-income countries agree that rich countries should provide more funds for climate action in developing countries than participants in the low-income countries. Still, there is a clear majority in the richer countries for this demand. It is only a difference in degree, not in substance.

**World Wide Views as a Tool to Democratize International Negotiations**

We have shown that the WWViews method is successful in engaging citizens in complex issues in a meaningful way. In contrast to opinion polls, participants were given scientifically sound background information first and had then the opportunity to deliberate on their views. They were not required to instantaneously state an opinion. Citizens were given time to acquire knowledge and test their opinions in discussions with other citizens. Thus, this process gives participants time to form their opinions and then articulate them. Thereby, the WWViews process provides unique and highly valuable input for decision-makers and stakeholders.

Consequently, stakeholders have shown great interest in the process. WWViews on Climate and Energy was supported by the secretariat of the UNFCCC, for example by holding joint press conferences and distributing WWViews materials. In our conversations, representatives of the national delegations and other officials agreed that this process provides them with additional information and viewpoints. The fact that the citizens make informed votes on the relevant issues seems to be especially important.

As a result, the discussions reflected the informed opinions of the very people who have to bear the consequences of climate change. Because the process was carried out in all participating countries in the same way, within a short time a global opinion of non-organized civil society emerged and was able to reach the international process of negotiations.

### **Looking Back: Assessment of World Wide Views on Climate and Energy**

It is, however, very hard to assess the impact a project like WWViews has on international negotiations of such large dimensions as COP21. The project and its partners never had the intention of swaying the negotiations in one direction or the other. The more realistic goal has always been to provide an opportunity for the ordinarily non-engaged civil society to voice their views. In our view, this goal has been reached. The extent to which a process like WWViews might exercise influence ultimately depends on the willingness of policy-makers to take its results and messages seriously. As policy-makers became more acquainted with the WWViews method, we think they became more inclined to seriously take this new input into consideration.

Although the WWViews method contains a number of key principles like the engagement of non-organized citizen, the provision of sound information, and the aspect of open deliberation among participants, the details are not set in stone and subject to revision. This was the third application of the WWViews process, and it was also by far the largest project using this method. Thus, there are a few aspects of the day-to-day execution that can be identified that need improvement. For instance, it became clear that many local partners need more support for their dissemination activities on the national level. The experience and the necessary skills and resources for an effective dissemination of the results and communication with the national stakeholders and policy-makers are unevenly distributed among the partners. There is a need for more training and tools for dissemination by local partners that will have to be addressed.

At the international level, the dissemination work done by the partners of the international coordination was highly successful. As was discussed above, policymakers and stakeholders seemed to be genuinely interested in the process and the results. Still, the method could benefit from even more visibility. More stakeholders and policy-makers should be made familiar. A more continuous application of the WWViews process should be the aim. In our view, the method could be included in the Article 6 Toolbox of good practices of public participation of the UNFCCC.

### **Looking Ahead: Citizen Participation in the Implementation of the Paris Agreement**

WWViews on Climate and Energy was carried out in preparation of COP21. Now that the Paris Agreement has been adopted and will presumably come into force in the near future, a method that combines the national and the international levels in the definition and implementation of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions is needed. We believe that the WWViews method can be the inspiration for that. The partners of the international coordination are currently working on adapting the method to this specific task. In article 12 of the Paris Agreement, policy-makers codified the need for “public awareness [and] public participation.” In our view, there needs to be efforts to persuade decision-makers that “public participation” should include citizen participation processes in contrast to the involvement solely of NGOs.

The partners of the international coordination are also preparing a new round of citizen consultations using the WWViews method. It is planned that this time, citizens will deliberate about issues



concerning the world's oceans and seas in preparation of the UN High-level conference in June 2017 in the Fiji.

### **Conclusion**

The success of WWViews on Climate and Energy in 2015 has helped to establish recognition for the method as a possibility for global citizen participation into global policy making and topics of global justice. Approximately 10,000 citizens were reached face-to-face in the international process through their participation in citizen consultations and integration into a global dialogue on climate change. Their views and opinions were presented in summarized form to delegations and other key stakeholders and climate-actors as input on the way to Paris. Presentations and personal conversations made it clear that it was important to first create a basis of trust. Confidence in the results of the WWViews process has been obtained firstly through methodical approach, and secondly through the neutrality of the international and local organizers (no campaigners). In order to ensure that the methods could be applied uniformly to all citizens' consultations, the carefully selected national partner organizations were trained both in workshops and in several online seminars. The substantive basis materials were created by the international coordination (information brochure and videos, poll questions) and delivered to the partners, along with the online tool offering equal access to the results.

Hence we think that this method for international citizen participation contributes to global justice in the field of climate action by giving equal voice to a wide range of citizens all over the world. It facilitates a global discourse about the pressing issues and illuminates the opinions of citizens in different parts of the world. Differences in opinion as well as agreements can be made more transparent in this way. World Wide Views contribute to paving the road of global democracy.