YO! at COP22, an overview

The group of young scientists, Youth for Ocean (YO!), component of the Ocean and Climate Platform endorsed by FACT-O, had the opportunity to participate at COP22, the climate conference dedicated to implementing the Paris Agreement and action. Marrakech was an important step in integrating the ocean in climate negotiations. Oceans Day in the green zone, Ocean and Climate Forum, first Oceans Action Day in the blue zone, Because the Ocean declaration … COP22 put the ocean at the centre of climate. This is why we would like to thank Isabelle Raynaud-Delfini and the Commissariat Général du Développement Durable team for having given us the opportunity and the means to showcase the youth’s commitment in ocean related mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

YO! was fully invested in this dynamic process for the ocean and for youth. Two young scientists, Claire Bertin and Romain Schumm, were able to express the younger generation’s expectations for the ocean, and highlight major topics (international law, Nationally Determined Contributions, ecosystem services) during the Forum hosted by the Ocean and Climate Platform. That evening, Bleuenn Guilloux, Dimitri Kalenitchenko and Julien Voyé were able to exchange a few words on issues they take to heart, in presence of Ségolène Royal, at the French Pavilion. The group’s coordinator, Louise Ras, was presented the opportunity to show the President of the Republic François Hollande how committed the youth is in ocean protection. “Which interests push us to integrate the ocean in the implementation of the Paris Agreement?” was the object of a side-event organised by YO! at the French Pavilion. This session brought together two oceanography students, Rishi Sugla and Katherine Zaba, of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and Abdelmalek Faraj, director of the Institution National de Recherche Halieutique of Casablanca. Brän Quinquis, inter-ministerial delegate in charge of the COP21 for Polynesia, and Ronald Jumeau, ambassador at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Seychelles to the United Nations, also spoke.

These events were the opportunity to build international relations with other youth climate action groups. We were able to exchange with YOUNGO, platform of youth non-governmental organisations observer at the UNFCCC, CliMates, a student think tank promoting climate solutions, or even students from Scripps. These links will enable us to develop productive partnerships to ensure that youth organisations linked to climate integrate ocean programmes and convey these topics in their actions.

YO! hopes to pursue it action in “ocean” events in 2017: SDG meeting in New York in June 2017, Our Ocean in Malta in October, COP23 in Bonn in November, FACT-O conferences, including that of January in Mount Vernon, Virginia. Furthermore, a participation at a Scripps symposium is intended, as to promote exchanges between French and American students.

COP22, COP of action, is also a COP of youth and ocean, calling for a mobilisation we are ready to take on.