

Sustainability and the youth: the green unknown

Your excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Fellow students,

Thank you for being present here today because by being here, you show that you truly care and that you are just as worried as we are for our future – a future that will have to be green if we want us and the future generations to not just “survive”, but to “live”.

Promoting Sustainable Development for a Green Future is no longer just an option, it is our only option. But not all hope is lost. Every single day, in the news, on social media, and everywhere around us, conscious young individuals strive to become what the past generations could not be: sustainable, bright, respectful to the earth, and most importantly, green. For House of the Dragon fans, when I say green, I do not mean supporting the High Towers – I am in team black as well.

With COP27 underway, it is an excellent time and opportunity to discuss what further actions we can take, and what further we would like our leaders to do. Our leaders represent us and are here because their job is to serve us, and not the other way around.

But let us talk briefly about renewable energy sources: for energy law fans, I think that this will be interesting. China is the world's leading country in electricity production from renewable energy sources, with over triple the generation of the second-ranking country, the United States.¹ I myself am very interested in this subject, as I am currently writing and working on my thesis concerning renewable energy and the free movement of goods in the EU. It seems like Cyprus and the EU have quite some catching up to do with China on this matter. The renewable energy directive of the EU has set some strict and some would even say ambitious goals for the 27 Member States and aims primarily to promote the use of renewable energy sources in the continent and within the EU. Of course, things are difficult nowadays due to fears regarding energy security ect. that I'm sure you've already heard of in the news. However, we must not let our fear stop us from ensuring that our future will be green, otherwise we might not have a future at all.

¹ The leading countries for installed renewable energy in 2021 were China, the U.S., and Brazil. China was the leader in renewable energy installations, with a capacity of around 1,020 gigawatts. The U.S., in second place, had a capacity of around 325 gigawatts.

Cyprus could also become a leader in the production of renewable energy if only we stop holding back. Currently, the island is powered almost exclusively by heavy fuel oil and limited renewable energy sources, as well as natural gas. Our sun, which we're very well-known abroad for, is a key asset for changing this. The University of Cyprus already has a solar park name Phaethon and is in the works and hopes to have completed a second solar park named Apollon in the near future, which will be built in the gray zone of the UN.

I am grateful that my university is taking these initiatives to help our island become greener and more sustainable. But this will not be enough. All of us have to contribute, but most of all, the companies and the mass producers of waste and carbon emissions will have to change their ways, otherwise, all our collective efforts will be cast aside and be considered futile.

Once again, thank you for being here. I look forward to our discussion and to hearing everyone else's opinion and thoughts on the matter.

Stefanos Charalampous