

Earth System as a Common Heritage of Humankind

Will Steffen's Legacy and the Portuguese Climate Law

Mar da Palha Auditorium,
Oceanário de Lisboa

29 JANUARY

Exactly one year ago, the remarkable scientist Will Steffen (1947-2023), a pioneer of the Earth System Sciences, passed away. The aim of this conference, organised by Common Home of Humanity with the support of the Oceano Azul Foundation, is to deepen his scientific and civic legacy, always geared towards ensuring that, in the current and critical epoch of the Anthropocene, the new vision offered by the Earth System Sciences may be present in law and public policies, at the level of nations and within the international system itself.

Portugal has a special responsibility in this task, as it was the first country in the world to recognise the climate as a Common Heritage of Humanity in its 2021 Climate Law. This means that the Portuguese law identifies the lack of conformity between the causes of the global environmental and climate crisis and the legal and political framework that the international community has at its disposal to deal with them. Will Steffen has always emphasised that the climate is an "emergent property" of the Earth System, including the atmosphere and oceans, whose functional dynamics is totally incompatible with the static and rigid vision that continues to predominate in politics and international law, helping to explain the failure of more than three decades of climate policy and diplomacy. The challenge left by both Will Steffen's work and the Portuguese Climate Law is to forge the forms and instruments that will make that Common Heritage a safe and long-lasting reality, otherwise we will only have in common the tragedy of our failure as a human civilisation.

PROGRAMME

2.30 p.m.

Welcome

José Soares dos Santos, President of Oceano Azul Foundation

2.40 p.m.

Tribute to Professor Will Steffen

Moderator: Sara Moreno Pires, President of the Common Home of Humanity

Tiping positive change to avoid climate tipping points

Tim Lenton, Chair in Climate Change and Earth System Science (online)

The Scientific Revolution of Earth System Sciences

Viriato Soromenho-Marques, Philosopher and Professor at the University of Lisbon

The “Legal Breakthrough: to recognize the Earth System. Not the physical Earth, but the software

Paulo Magalhães, Principal Researcher at CIJ – Faculty of Law of the University of Porto and Executive Director of the Common Home of Humanity

Planetary Boundaries - A Framework for a safe and just transformation

Message from Johan Rockström, Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and Professor in Earth System Science at the University of Potsdam

3.50 p.m.

Coffee-Break

4.10 p.m.

From Science to Policy

Round Table: “The Software” of the Planet, Multilateralism and Common Heritage

Moderator: Álvaro Vasconcelos, International Relations Expert and Founder of Forum Demos

Introduction By:

Jeffrey Sachs, University Professor; Director of the Center for Sustainable Development in the Earth Institute, Columbia University, New York (online)

- Tiago Pitta e Cunha, CEO of Oceano Azul Foundation
- Maria Fernanda Espinosa, Executive Director, GWL Voices for Change and Inclusion, President of the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly (online)
- Augusto Lopez Claros, International Economist, Executive Director and Chair of the Global Governance Forum
- Francisco Araújo, Civic Entrepreneur, Law Guest Lecturer, Youth Leader at LIDERA
- Cátia Margarido, Head of Environment, VINCI Energies Portugal and Task Force for the recognition of Climate as a Common Heritage of Humankind

5.25 p.m.

Closing remarks

Zacarias da Costa, Executive Secretary of CPLP – Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa

João Cravinho, Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs