



ENVIRONMENT

Climate Scepticism©

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Words are explained alongside the text

Stressed syllables are underlined and in bold*

On September 14th, during a **business conference**, ex-**president** Nicolas Sarkozy surprised his **audience** by strongly **endorsing** a **climate sceptic** position. According to AFP he stated that, "the climate has been changing for four **billion** years, if the **Sahara** has become a **desert** it isn't because of **industry**. You need to be as **arrogant** as men are to believe we have changed the climate." Mr Sarkozy has been **discounting** the **human impact** on climate change **lately**, but up until now he has never been as **explicit**.

Since then **criticism** from many **politicians** has been **flooding** the media, even within his own **Republican** party. Some journalists also saw a **similarity** to US **candidate** Donald Trump's position on the matter. There seems to be general **agreement** that Mr Sarkozy's declaration is part of his **strategy** to win back **far-right** voters for next year's elections.

Exactly six years ago, on September 10th 2009, **in-office** Sarkozy was giving the **opposite** speech. He stated: "Without **corrective** action on our part, **current** warming **threatens** to **accelerate** between 1.8 and 4 **degrees** by 2100, with a risk of sea levels rising a further 18 to 59 cm. It's time to act. [...] Since my election, I have always wanted our country to be **in the forefront of** the **effort** to **take up** what I know to be **ineluctable environmental challenges**."

Now enough of contradictions and **politics**. Let's have a deeper look into the matter. Can we still be climate

to endorse (vb.) to approve of, support

to discount (vb.) to decide that something is not worth considering or giving attention

lately (adv.) in the recent past

to flood (vb.) to fill abundantly

far-right (adj.) used to refer to political groups whose opinions are very extreme

in-office (exp.) in power

current (adj.) of the present time

to threaten (vb.) to menace

in the forefront of (adv.) in the vanguard of

to take up (took-taken) (phrasal vb.) to accept

sceptic in 2016? The answer is no.

Climate change has **undeniably** always been part of our planet's evolution. However, the **scientific** community agrees that today's **circumstances differ** both in terms of the **extent** and the speed of the changes. Some **experts, backed** by Nobel prize-winning **atmospheric chemist** Paul Crutzen, have gone as far as declaring a new **geological era**, the **Anthropocene**. According to them, **humanity** is having such a large and rapid impact on our planet that we will **irreversibly affect** it right down to the **geology** of our planet, they say that we left the twelve thousand year-old **Holocene** era - the one that made human life possible - around the 1950s. What does that mean for us? Can we still be **optimistic** or is our **species doomed** to extinction?

Unfortunately it is difficult to make a **reasonable bet** on what the **effect** of those **massive** changes will be in the far future. However we do know **a fair bit** about what is **ahead of** us in the next **decades**. We know that our environmental challenges are **first and foremost** social. Local and **global climatic** changes affect **vulnerable** populations more than anyone else, **i.e.** those who can **afford** less risk prevention. Today there are about twenty **million** climate **refugees** every year and the **figure** keeps **increasing**. This is far more than war refugees. By 2050 those **estimates** are expected to rise to 250 million each year.

Some people - far enough from the risk - choose to **ignore** those **concerns**. Others **develop** what we could call an "eco-**phobia**": a fear or **dismissal** of **ecological** problems and the natural world. But there are an increasing number of people who see those issues as an **opportunity** to search for **viable alternatives**, to **collaborate**, to **innovate**, to **create** employment.

Congolese engineer Maha Lee Cassy, has decided to be part of those **individuals** who **tackle** the climate change **consequences**. A year ago, he created 'SOS My Climate': a **mobile participatory** platform that gives a space to those affected by climate change to **speak out** and tell their stories.

Cassy's story itself has recently been published in the "Solutions and co" media **initiative**, a French **project**

extent(n.) scope, range

to back (vb.) to support

Anthropocene (n.) time in which it is possible to see the effect that people have had on the environment and climate

to doom (vb.) to make something bad certain to happen

bet (n.) guess, expectation

a fair bit (exp.) quite a lot

ahead of (adv.) in the future

decade (n.) period of ten years

first and foremost (exp.) more than anything else

global (adj.) relating to the whole world

i.e. = *id est*, that is to say

to afford (vb.) to be able to pay for

figure (n.) amount expressed in numbers

to ignore (vb.) to disregard

concern (n.) worry, anxiety

dismissal (n.) rejection

to tackle (vb.) to try to deal with something

to speak out (spoke-spoken) (phrasal vb.) to state one's opinion publicly

that collaborates with media around the world to **promote** climate change related **innovations** instead of **merely focusing** on **disasters**. You should go and check some of them out **online**. And next time the climate change topic comes up during a friendly chat - before getting into its politics - share a story of an **innovative** project that inspires you!

merely(adv.) simply

online (adv.) using the Internet



*** Tip!**

Note the stress pattern in the adjectives ending in **-IC/ICAL**:

atmos**ph**eric, clim**at**ic, optim**is**tic, **scep**tic, scient**if**ic, ecolog**og**ical, geolog**og**ical