

Speech by the President

Mouvement Ecologique — Blanche Weber

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War in the Middle East — have we learned from the invasion of Ukraine?

"In parts of the Middle East, a humanitarian crisis is developing and is escalating rapidly. (...). The consequences are not limited to the directly affected areas. The Middle East is central to global energy, trade and transport systems. If these are disrupted, the effects are felt worldwide — and the risk of hunger increases far beyond the region." ... so say the UN in the context of the war in the Middle East.

Do you still remember the headlines following Russia's invasion of Ukraine? Food shortages, rising food prices, disruption of supply chains... that was what you could read. From now on, it was said, more emphasis would be placed on regionality and sovereignty.

... And in agricultural policy, things continued in the wrong direction

The big question is: what fundamental consequences were drawn, including for our food production?

As far as the EU and Luxembourg are concerned: at double speed, things then continued in the... wrong direction.

While charming campaigns like "That's how Luxembourg tastes" are organized — the Ministry of Agriculture simply relies on "good will" and awareness-raising actions to promote regionality — hard facts are being set in the opposite direction!

The Mercosur Agreement, rightly rejected by farmers, was supported at EU level by Luxembourg and voted through in Parliament without hesitation. Under the guise of alleged geopolitical reasons, agreements are being concluded with dubious autocrats like Milei that destroy small farmers in South American countries — and put European farmers under even more pressure. Are these the consequences that had been promised? Can geopolitics really only be conducted on the backs of ecology, indigenous peoples and small farmers?

Can our imagination about what globalization should look like and how it should develop in these times of crisis not stretch further?

Second example: Claude Meisch launched Restopolis and positively maintains that organic and regional products have priority in school canteens, even in terms of price. This provision

achieves substantially more than a charming awareness campaign that shifts responsibility onto the individual. Restopolis's purchasing strategy has opened a large new market for organic farming and has also massively created new sales opportunities for regional products.

And what does Agriculture Minister Martine Hansen do, since she is responsible for supporting our agriculture? She has been talking for a very long time only about 4 to 5 pilot projects in hospitals and institutions in Diekirch and Schrassig, where they want to look at what could be done following the Restopolis model... Of course, also in the trial phase without organic.

At the halfway point of the legislative period, she has nothing more to show than talking about 4 to 5 pilot projects that moreover still appear to be far from producing concrete results! And the Minister of Health? She finds organic and regional nutrition quite good, as she said at a recent meeting with us. But: she couldn't really do anything there, she also said. It was in the hands of the hospitals to become active in this area, the finances in the hands of the Finance Minister. Consequence: no new market for organic and regional products.... Are we making Luxembourg as "resilient" as our Prime Minister so likes to say? No!

Another example? Luxembourg seems to have a taste for continuing to serve the pesticide lobby, indeed for holding on to an agricultural model that makes our farming quasi-dependent on them. How else is one to explain that our agriculture minister, despite the systematic contamination of our food by pesticides and forever chemicals, simply emphasizes: as long as threshold values are not exceeded, these foods are not contaminated! It is quite simply grotesque and unreal that it is said everything is fine, even when there are dozens of pesticides (up to 15 according to some analyses) in a food product, as long as the threshold value for each individual pesticide is not exceeded. Simply because there is no threshold value for the cumulative effect of pesticides.

No threshold value, no problem... such is the logic. Yet we know that in recent years, new scientific analyses have consistently led to pesticide threshold values being revised downwards, i.e. made lower... never upwards! Does that bother our politics: No! Because we also tolerate that for 15 years it has been decided at EU level that the "candidates for substitution" i.e. pesticides that are demonstrably harmful to health — must be removed from the market, but nothing happens. When for 15 years nothing has happened in an area where the problem has been recognised and an exit has been decided upon, why get upset now about having a cocktail of pesticides in our food and eating chemicals every day?!

Mercosur, absent real support for organic and regional products, absent concrete support for sustainable agricultural production, denial of the problem: that is the response of Martine Hansen and the entire government — but also of the governing parties CSV and DP — to the crises.

One must genuinely describe that policy as irresponsible.

We as the Mouvement Ecologique will continue to campaign for fundamental reforms in agricultural policy in a scientific and factual manner, but with our clear language, and we say clearly:

- **Yes, to geopolitics that is stable and sustainable by not sacrificing ecological, democratic and social values, but on the contrary strengthening them;**
- **Yes, to far more consistent support for conventional farmers who want to farm more sustainably. Yes, to a common good premium for those farmers who work even more in the interest of the community and who preserve our nature, among other things;**
- **Yes, to organic farming;**
- **Yes, to organic and regional products in all public canteens;**
- **Yes, to a constructive and open dialogue with farmers, on how they can get out of globalization and the growth logic of "grow or go under".**

Yes, to take up a sustainable agricultural policy with concrete political measures.

Also, for the sake of farmers! Because they are centrally affected by the crises, are most exposed to pesticides, and their profession urgently needs prospects. Industrial enterprises are by now preparing themselves for the energy transition, acknowledging the climate crisis and making efforts to move away from fossil energies. They know they must do so if they want to still be producing tomorrow. It would be for agriculture to recognize that if it continues to destroy its production conditions as it does now, it too will go under tomorrow...

.... More social redistributive justice for a social-ecological transition

Agricultural policy is unfortunately substantially co-responsible for the destruction of biodiversity, since it is precisely in open land that species extinction is particularly marked. These are scientific facts — the World Biodiversity Council says so too. One would need to speak much more with farmers and seek solutions so that they receive the right signals and support from politics to go in a different direction. That is precisely why agricultural policy was the focus of our work in 2025, while naturally also campaigning for the preservation of our green structures and the creation of new ones in our localities.

On the World Species Day of the United Nations on 3 March, we as the Mouvement Ecologique had an action in front of the Ministry of State. Our goal: to give a voice and a face to species threatened with extinction. Spontaneously, we were around 75 people standing in front of the Ministry of State to draw attention to this dramatic loss of species.

Minister of State Luc Frieden was prepared, together with Environment Minister Serge Wilmes, to receive our position paper. He seemed genuinely moved and honestly admitted that he was not aware of these species to that extent. But he also recited his, one might say, mantra: We need growth to be able to afford our ecology and social policy at all. This was also repeated at the last CSV congress.

Such statements should today be a no-go! The current system is, at least from an ecological perspective, but also with social tensions etc., in the process of collapsing.

I want to show an example, with figures from Germany, but for Luxembourg things should not be fundamentally different:

Look at this A4 sheet of paper. Let's say: 1 cm represents 50,000 euros. If one now slowly fills the sheet — 1 cm for 50,000 euros, another 1 cm for 50,000 euros — one would then have 1.5 million euros on a sheet. 99% of Germans find their wealth on this sheet.

Where do you think the richest 1% of Germans are, to put it simply? 5 sheets, 20, 50, 100, 1,000? They are 10 to 20 km height! 10 to 20 km — that's the altitude at which a plane travels. And we are on a single A4 sheet, or maybe 2 or 3.

And it is also known that the richest 1%, through their lifestyle, are according to Oxfam calculations responsible for more than half of CO₂ emissions worldwide. And on average, their wealth continues to grow by 7% per year. 7% of that gigantic amount is in absolute terms far more than 7% for the people on the paper...

We need taxation of the "super-rich", because it is they who — as Elon Musk and others demonstrably show — are undermining our democracy.

If the "super-rich" were to pay even just 1 to 2 to 3% in taxes on their wealth, they would still become much richer every year. And in Luxembourg too, there is a massive gap between poor and rich, not even to mention the speculation on land that is in the hands of very few people...

That is why: money is needed for the social-ecological transition. The transformation of our energy system alone will still require immense sums, support for financially disadvantaged people must be expanded... The discussion about where this money should come from is also overdue in Luxembourg.

And this money cannot come from growth. On one hand because it is unrealistic that we will achieve that level of growth — and on the other hand because growth as an end in itself destroys precisely what we would theoretically like to preserve through growth.

That is why: social-ecological transition means very clearly, as one of the main demands: social redistributive justice!

But our country is opposing a wealth tax in international negotiations. What an anachronism!

This is also a betrayal of countries with fewer financial resources, which are even more urgently dependent on these revenues. We are betraying them in multiple respects: they are already suffering very concretely and the most from the catastrophe climate. We are still exploiting their resources. And now we would also oppose new revenues opening there that would be extremely important for them and where the rich would not even notice!

We call on the government to stand up for social justice at home and worldwide — without it, the social-ecological transition will not succeed!

And when we as a Mouvement hear that the government and Foreign Minister X. Bettel are even putting the so-called "additionality" up for discussion — i.e. that if we spend money here on climate refugees, these funds could be deducted from the development budget — we say no! No! We solidarize very clearly with the development organizations and the Cercle de Coopération who oppose this. Get the money from somewhere else!

... Even more consistent and rapid measures needed in energy and climate policy

When I am on the subject of social justice, I am directly involved in energy policy.

There too: do you remember what happened after Russia's invasion of Ukraine? At first, we were in crisis mode and were glad to get through the winter. At the same time, the political statements were clear: we must become more independent in our energy supply, as Europe, and also as far as possible as Luxembourg.

And now the headlines are full again: energy prices are exploding, the question is being asked whether we will have enough energy if the war in the Middle East escalates further, severe economic downturns are already here, there is discussion about whether the state must intervene to keep energy prices under control, etc.

Has more happened there than in agriculture? Or is the balance equally negative? I would say: mixed:

To be positive: in the electricity sector, something has happened. Even if there is certainly room for improvement, the expansion of solar and wind is progressing and there was also an energy round table where it was examined with the stakeholders what could additionally be improved.

But: in private households, we consume — if one excludes the car — 2/3 of our energy for heating, not for electricity. That is why we urgently need a heat planning strategy that also consistently paves the way to an exit from gas and oil.

It is already almost dizzying what needs to be done: we must completely transform the entire system based on gas and oil. Install heat pumps — collect heat from companies, sewage treatment plants, water etc. for heating and distribute it in heating networks — coordinate production and consumption — where it makes sense, lay networks in the streets to distribute heat.... And look at who should finance and implement all this, because the networks will certainly not be profitable at the beginning either. And who maintains these networks? The people who currently distribute gas, while completely different expertise is needed. Who controls the prices? Because unlike electricity, as a client you are dependent on a single supplier, you are at their mercy. You must accept the price being asked, the supplier cannot be changed. It must also be examined where an individual heat pump, where a collective solution like a cold or warm network is more sensible...

And at the very latest in 25 years, i.e. by 2050, by now already in just 24 years, all of this must work. That is the day after tomorrow!

And what is happening? We are still discussing how close a heat pump may be installed to the neighbour, whether it is allowed to come in front of the door or not. Every municipality still has its own regulations. Well, if we need years to clarify such banal questions, then good luck with all the others.

All right. In the ministry, 2 people have been employed in recent years, services also apparently reorganised, to do the whole job. That is certainly positive, but it is simply not enough. So, few people — that is not what you call "driving nails with hammer heads". Because this concerns the transition of one of the central core areas of our society, which we all depend on!

While the heat strategy is plodding along, the government even organized 2 large events on the topic of Carbon Capture, the controversial methods of storing CO₂. This concerns in our country perhaps a handful of companies or so, no more. There were 2 "summits", a task force was set up... That same dynamism, that same commitment from the government in heat planning does not yet exist.

Yet heat planning is also eminently important from a social perspective.

Otherwise, the people who cannot afford a heat pump, who live in rented accommodation or whose house is not suitable for a heat pump, will be delivered helplessly to raise energy prices. We need a socially just design of energy transition.

When one speaks of social justice, one must naturally also speak of the Climate and Social Plan. The EU prescribes that every country draws one up. I believe it is thanks to us, together with the Chamber of Employees, the OGBL and the LCGB, that it became an issue at all. Competent ministries have at any rate also engaged in dialogue.

But we would be so glad if more of it were already being implemented: because we should not delude ourselves — rising energy prices are hitting people with fewer financial resources particularly hard again. But many questions are not yet clarified in the Climate and Social Plan: How do we define in the first place who should be supported, which target groups should be reached with which instruments? How much money does the government want to mobilize to invest in the Plan and the measures? We, as well as the trade unions, await clear answers. And very quickly.

There would be much more to say in the energy sector. For example, that we finally need an offensive on renovation.

If we continue to focus on new construction instead of renovation, we will miss our climate targets... and further improve our landscape and localities. But I fear we will also not make enough progress in the housing crisis! It is absurd that while new housing is desperately being sought, 5 to 10% of houses in municipalities are empty, yet the authorities above all push for new builds and even make renovation more difficult: idiotic administrative provisions about how renovation must be carried out, insufficiently developed financial support... The so important tax on vacant dwellings, which also appears in the coalition agreement, is not a priority for the Interior Minister... What an anachronism. What a misguided policy from the perspective of resources, biodiversity and climate protection, but also from a social perspective.

We say clearly to the government — draw lessons from the latest crisis and work far more consistently on the social-ecological energy transition:

Really take heat planning seriously! We need a strategy this year yet showing where the journey should go, a draft law, clear discussions with the stakeholders about who should do what in the future!

Also give answers to the open questions from the Climate and Social Plan! And give yourselves a concrete timetable so that implementation begins this year yet. By the end of the year at the latest, a clear solution must also be on the table and partially implemented as to how people in rented accommodation can be taken along in the transition!

Do not continue to embellish Luxembourg's CO₂ emissions, as happened again in 2025. Say honestly: they are not falling in all areas as planned and as they should be. Not in buildings, not in industry! Honest dialogue is the basis of consistent action!

And: stop focusing exclusively on new construction! Launch a real renovation offensive: our skilled trades will benefit from this!

And allow me a brief digression. We all know in the energy sector, we waste a lot of time in expanding renewables and also in heat planning. We would be in a different position today if we had acted consistently. And I don't know how you feel.

When I now read, right in the middle of the crisis, that people are again talking about "small" nuclear power plants, second generation, as the answer to our problems, I fail to understand the world. In 15 years, they'll be ready, says the nuclear lobby. But that is what they said 10, 20, 30, 40 years ago too. And some politicians still fall for it. It is simply unbelievable! We need solutions now, and they are on the table.

Luxembourg must say no to research funds now being invested at EU level into nuclear power. A Savings Bank as a state bank may also not define nuclear power as sustainable! We expect a clear position on this!

Now taking political responsibility

The Club of Rome has defined 5 pillars with which the social-ecological transition can succeed. I have named 3 of them: energy policy and agricultural policy / food production — and a different financial policy / tax justice. The other 2 are equal opportunity, including for women, and democracy and co-determination.

The sociologist Andreas Reckwitz says:

"... In my view, many people believe themselves to be in a kind of social transition phase whose direction is not clear. Perhaps things will go up again, perhaps down. Perhaps we will remain in a kind of stagnation for longer. From this uncertainty arises a tendency to concentrate more on the

moment, on the here and now. One does not want and cannot let one's gaze roam so far into the future."

Juli Zeh responds to him:

"The feeling is rather that the problems that exist are not being sufficiently addressed." and this: "Responsibility is shifted onto the individual, and the major levers that are needed in order to become viable for the future are not being turned."

They describe, in my view, the situation excellently. We face immense challenges and many people are aware of that.

What we need is a politics that is prepared to finally give the real answers now, in times of crisis — and yes, to initiate a genuine transition and have the courage to replace outdated patterns with refreshing new ones. To shape our future positively.

Because that is what it is about: not empty talk, not just raising awareness in individuals. But political responsibility, a clear direction — clear choices.

For many years, growth meant that the next generations should have a better life one day. That was true for a time. But now we are counting on our imagination, and we have it:

We know that many people in our countries live in prosperity, that we can now focus our energy on other goals: on social redistributive justice and not blind maximization of consumption, on social connections, on giving our localities more quality of life through more greenery and less concrete, wellbeing, self-determination, good working conditions...

I know, we have already said that so many times, but these are our fundamental values, our convictions! We have no bad conscience about saying it repeatedly. On the contrary, we are proud of it! It is for others to have a bad conscience that things are no longer progressing.

They will have our support if they consistently shape our future. Because something must and will change is clear. The only question is does it happen "by design" i.e. consciously shaped and self-determined by us — or "by disaster", i.e. purely through catastrophes. We are actively shaping!

And we are, let me say this in closing, for a respectful, open dialogue. Factual, clear in its arguments — open to listening and to a change of perspective — in a respectful exchange with one another.