# Against global warming, we must establish an obligation to produce results

# *Sceptical about the ability of the Citizens’ Climate Convention to impose measures that are equal to the situation, Pierre Calame, Honorary President of the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation, in an address to Le Monde, advocates a radical change of approach* Warning from the scientific community; public commotion; public authorities’ commitment to act; finding that nothing has really changed; new warning from scientists, etc. Like a well-established dance step, the ritual has been repeated since 1979, when the first scientific warning was issued at the World Climate Conference. Until when? Gradually, the ballet is turning into a dance of death, dragging rich and poor alike into the same ruin. The recent forum Facing the ecological crisis, rebellion is necessary signed by nearly 1,000 scientists and presented on the front page of Le Monde on 21 February, underscores, after dozens of warnings in the same vein, that ‘for decades, successive governments have been unable to implement strong and rapid action to address the climate crisis’. It calls for action by citizens themselves. We will discover tomorrow, of course, that these actions are equally powerless to bring about the necessary structural transformation. Scientists are hopeful that the proposals that will come out of the Citizens’ Climate Convention, whose sixth (out of seven) session ends on Sunday 8 March, will finally rise to the challenge. This highly illusional if we look at the mandate given to the Convention, which invites citizens to list actions classified in five areas (housing, travel, work and production, food, consumption), the limited time given to citizens who for the most part can only devote their weekends to thinking about such a vast subject, and the work methodology that puts them through a mill which they didn’t choose. The same causes will produce the same effects. We will discover in two or three years’ time that the measures adopted were unfortunately ‘anecdotal’, to repeat the criticism levelled by a number of NGOs against the President of the French Republic after his visit to the Mont Blanc on 13 February. What would one say of a doctor recommending the same treatment for several decades with no results? One would consider changing both. But no, in a matter that concerns the future of all of us, we go on, we take the same ones and start again. Another waltz: warning, excitement, new measures, realizing that nothing has changed. Only the musicians seem tireless. Where is the wolf? He's clearly visible, no need to go looking for him in the woods. The approach is always the same. We show through technical scenarios that it would be possible to reduce our total carbon footprint, including grey energy (the energy used to manufacture and transport imported goods and services). We then set up obligations to ensure that these scenarios can be achieved, while ensuring that our industry, our growth and our standard of living are not jeopardized. And, of course, if these means did not achieve the desired result, no one is responsible. Politics and economics are thus two binoculars through which we are looking from the wrong end. Instead allowing us see the future close up, they put us farther away from it, to the point that it is an abstraction: beyond electoral deadlines for politics, beyond profitability forecasts for the economy. Between effective measures against global warming, the effect of which will only be felt in the long term and on a global scale, and reducing unemployment, what is likely to determine future elections? To ask the question is to answer it. Conclusion: to step out of the dance of death, a radical change of approach is inevitable, where the abundant obligations of means are replaced with an obligation to produce results, and the legal responsibility of governments is established with regard to this obligation. Obligation to produce results: the cap on our total carbon footprint, including direct and indirect emissions, must be reduced by six to seven percent per year. This means that it is a scarce, and increasingly scarce, commodity. How can a scarce commodity be distributed equitably among a population ? There are not thirty-six solutions, there are only three: act on the price of the commodity, through taxation, until total demand does not exceed the cap; put the commodity up for auction; or distribute it equitably among the entire population. The first two solutions are tantamount to reserving a commodity, fossil-energy consumption, on which everyone is dependent, for the wealthiest. In other words, they are not politically feasible. Remains the third: allocating emission quotas to every person. The mechanism is described in the attached file. The responsibility of leaders to comply with our international commitments and allocating emission allowances to all is the subject of a referendum. Will the Citizens’ Convention be able to propose it? Probably not, considering the mill in which the citizens who are members of the Convention are caught. We can only hope for a surge. Pierre Calame is the author of Petit traité d'œconomie, Editions Charles Leopold Mayer, 2018. Pierre Calame (École polytechnique graduate, civil engineer, Honorary President of the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation)