

Benjamin Van Bunderen Robberechts Speech
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March for biodiversity and the recognition of ecocide

Today I want to talk about a subject very close to my heart, the link between the recognition of ecocide as an international crime and the rights of the Child.

You may be thinking, he's only 16, what does he have to teach us? Maybe I am still young but I have unfortunately already experienced the devastating cost of the climate crisis from far too closely.

When I was 14 when my good friend Rosa and I were swept away by the swirling floods in 2021. Floods caused by the climate crisis.

Rosa and I had planned to change the world together. We talked about how we were going to do better than our parents, about how we should do everything we could to tackle the climate crisis and protect nature.

Rosa and I were at camp in the Ardennes, there was a small stream running next to our camp site. A very small stream that meant nothing. After a day of heavy rain, it suddenly started raining like hell. It happened so fast... We had to go higher up, away from the water. I don't know exactly how it happened but before I knew it, Rosa was taken away by it.

The water became a monster, a swirling brown monster.

I jumped behind her. I held on to her.

We were dragged by the water together.

I held Rosa until the monster pulled her out of my arms.

Rosa was found 3 days later, 11 km away, against a farmer's fence.

Rosa was 15 years old. Meanwhile, we celebrated her 16th and 17th birthdays, without her.

The days and weeks after Rosa's death were hell for me, thousands of questions raced through my head and I was angry at the whole world. How could this have happened?

How could it be that just a climate activist like Rosa had to die like this?

Then I asked myself a simple question. Which side am I on? I am on Rosa's side!

I am still on Rosa's side even though you don't see her.

Our planet is suffering and it is our generation and the generations after us who will inherit the consequences of the decision made today. We simply cannot afford to stand by passively while ecocide continues to ravage our earth!

Children are the most vulnerable when it comes to the consequences of ecocide. It is our future that is threatened by the loss of biodiversity, the climate crisis and the degradation of our ecosystems.

It is actually very simple, ecocide feeds the monster that carried Rosa away.

We are being denied our right to a healthy and sustainable environment, and it is time that we recognise that this is a violation of our fundamental rights as children.

By recognising ecocide as an international crime, we are sending a powerful message to the world.

The smallest child knows that ecocide is morally wrong.

It is time for the courts to realise that. Just as we recognise other crimes against humanity, such as genocide or war crimes, we must hold those responsible for ecocide accountable for their crimes.

Our rights to life, health and well-being are linked to the health of our planet. If we allow ecocide to continue unchecked, we rob ourselves of the future we deserve.

Recognising ecocide as an international crime will not only protect the rights of children, but also act as a deterrent to those who put profit over the well-being of our planet.

It is very simple. The people and corporations who value money over animal and human lives, they are the ones feeding the monster that dragged Rosa down, and they must be stopped!

It will create a legal framework that will hold those people and companies accountable for their actions and send a clear message that the destruction of our environment will not be tolerated.

We, the young generation, are rising up to demand justice for our planet and our future. We are not just activists; we are advocates of change.

We look at policymakers and draw our conclusions.

It is time!

It is time for us to come together, to stand up together and fight for what is right.

It is time to collectively, on 15 July, honour the dead who have already died as a result of the climate crisis.

It is time to demand that politicians stop thinking about the next election and start thinking about the interests of children and future generations!

It is time to introduce strict ecocide legislation.

Benjamin Van Bunderen Robberechts

#CLIMATE JUSTICE
FOR ROSA