The objective of the side-event K-4410-01 was to show the different levels at which decisions have to be taken with a view to reducing climate change. The first lecture was based on the most fundamental, meta-political level, defining the terms of a “Universal Declaration of the Rights of Humanity” for the present and the future, which could be included in the political Constitutions of states. This declaration provides the principles and norms – founded on humanity’s common destiny in its relationship with the Earth-ground – around which decisions and political, associative and citizen actions can be articulated. Intermediate levels (towns, businesses, territorial collectives, associations, etc) were then examined, followed by individual decisions and actions.

In his lecture, Yves Charles Zarka formulated the terms of a “Declaration of the Rights of Present and Future Humanity” and showed the issues involved with climate change. Common risks for the whole of humanity have become such that politics is obliged to move away from local, regional and national perspectives in order to pose, beyond those perspectives, a dimension which overshadows them: the cosmopolitical dimension. A Declaration of the Rights of Humanity would have as its object the simultaneous struggle against oppression, poverty, human exploitation, domination of one part of the planet by another, as well as ensuring the preservation of the Earth-ground (the habitable world) – that is, the future of humanity. The fundamental cosmopolitical principles on which a Declaration of the Rights of Humanity must be founded are: 1) the inappropriability of the Earth, and 2) responsibility for humanity. The Earth-ground does not belong to present generations; it is not their property. Preservation of the Earth-ground is the very basis of humanity’s present and future existence. Responsibility for humanity is not merely moral; it is also quasi-juridical and ought to find juridical expression in state Constitutions.

There followed the lecture by Anna Pagels, for whom the globalised market fails to solve environmental problems, making it necessary for states to intervene. But these interventions, generally weighty on the economic level, present dangers if the policy defined is ill-conceived or partisan. Taking inspiration from successes encountered in Germany and Denmark, the presentation attempted to illustrate ways of avoiding this pitfall. The principal way is to construct cooperative processes, well bounded by open rules about the learning process in collaborative decision-making.

For Nathalie Blanc climate change, in its primary manifestations, is not seen by societies as a
natural phenomenon. It appears more as a representation founded on an ensemble of scientific experiments, results, models and theories. As such it is hard to access for the different instances, groups, and collectives of citizens who are the ultimate agents of decision and action. To overcome this difficulty there needs to be questioning of real communities in terms of representations and actions. To achieve this, and to gain access to the profound registers (“capabilities”) which guide social practices in the context of the constraints and resources available to collectives, we should take an interest in the way narratives and life-stories are constructed by actors themselves or in interaction with other actors.

For S. Chan, COP 21 will open on a world stage where, at every level, towns, territorial collectives, businesses, various services, etc, are going to take initiatives related to attenuating climate change. The Paris conference ought to take place in a spirit of support for these dynamics. But it is also important to make it possible to harmonise these initiatives, and even more to avoid overlap or contradiction between them. To achieve this it is necessary to define the functions and structure of a general framework allowing the emergence of interrelation and coordination between the projects of various non-state actors. To define this framework, various experiences can be used as a guide (“Partnership for sustainable development”, “SD in Action”). The framework to be put in place must “belong” jointly to the UNFCC and non-state actors; it must also include harmonised sharing of the data available to each; lastly it should make sure that all actors, even secondary ones, can take part with no barriers to entry.

The (agricultural) earth, according to Sara Vigil, remains one of the principal primary factors of production for countries in the global south. Nowadays, in addition to the difficulties relating to economic and social obstacles to development, technological inadequacy and lack of capital, there is also an essential destabilising factor: “land-grabbing” by large globalised interests. These large interests use the theme of climate change as justification for land-grabbing, whether in the name of increasing agricultural yields or commercialising “environmental services” in order to produce bio-energies. Such land-grabbing develops unknown to local actors, who are unaware of the value of their land, but also by way of corruption and constraints imposed by authoritarian regimes. The World Bank, the FAO and the United Nations have all attempted to introduce rules. And so it appears that in Senegal and in Cambodia, the action of citizen groups and local or international NGOs is indispensable if this abusive land-grabbing is to be halted, and above all in order to promote real alternatives in terms of sustainable development.