Is declaring a climate emergency enough to stop the climate crisis? What we can learn from the COVID-19 pandemic

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If someone looks up the definition of emergency in any dictionary (for example in the Cambridge Dictionary), the following description can be read: "something dangerous or serious, that happens suddenly or unexpectedly and needs fast action in order to avoid harmful results for people or properties."

Keeping in mind the recent declaration of the state of emergency due to the climate crisis by many scientists, administrations, and institutions worldwide, it is clear that fast actions must be taken to avoid harmful results for human societies and the Earth's ecosystems. Accepting the declaration of a climate emergency by governments and institutions, the climate crisis is recognized as a dangerous and serious issue that needs fast(er) actions, as soon as possible.

However, despite this emergency declaration and the warnings from the scientific community in recent years about the importance of avoiding the irreversible effects of the climate crisis by reducing greenhouses gas emissions, the concentration of CO_2 in the atmosphere continues to increase.

The climate transition, as we like to call it instead of "climate change," shows high activity; the temperature is rising at a faster rate than scientists have predicted in the past, as can be shown by extreme heat waves around the world (for example those that are hitting Europe this

summer 2022).

We are experiencing a severe climate transition, probably the fastest that humans have ever seen, and despite the fact that we are aware that it is a serious problem—as demonstrated by the climate emergency declaration done by hundreds of institutions and governments worldwide—we are have not been able to significantly decrease our CO_2 emissions. A coordinated and powerful political regulation of the greenhouse gas emissions is needed to reduce the global temperature and avoid the irreversible environmental, economic, and social troubles that humanity will face in the coming decades.

A state of climatic alarm

Perhaps a new political and legal tool is needed. In our article, published in *Frontiers in Climate*, we proposed a new term: climatic alarm. The state of climatic alarm should compromise the following:

- It should be a global law legislated by a competent international body, such as the United Nations, and ratified by all governments.
- It should fundamentally affect countries that contribute the most to global emissions.
- The state of global climate emergency would necessarily require that most of the CO_2 emissions are suppressed, with the exception of the essential sectors needed to cover people's basic needs.
- States should ensure that anthropogenic activities with CO_2 emissions do not increase outside the state of emergency, with drastic penalties for going beyond the reference threshold.

Under the name of a state of climatic alarm, a regulation of CO_2 emissions will be possible, which will achieve the proposed goal of a

CO_2 emission reduction of 55% by 2030, and 80% by 2050, with the end goal to become CO_2 neutral not only in the European Union but the whole planet.

The COVID-19 pandemic taught us many things. That people's health is a priority; that the limitations taken by some governments had their effects on the spread of infections after 15 days; that bending the contagion curve is possible with restrictions. Without any regulation the pandemic would have likely generated much more mortality.

The climate crisis transition we are currently undergoing is in many aspects similar to the COVID-19 pandemic, because in order to mitigate the consequences, a regulation of CO_2 emissions is necessary. The measures of greenhouse gas emissions reduction taken today to reduce the CO_2 emissions and global temperature curves will not be noticed for another generation (it would take around 25 to 30 years, unlike 15 days in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic).

As in the pandemic, where regulation reduced infections and saved lives, the regulation of emissions is absolutely essential to reduce the curve of global temperature, which increases faster and faster every year, and then reduce the number of societies affected by a warmer and drier Earth.

We the humans have created the climatic crisis we are currently living, and we the humans are who can solve this problem. Let's apply all our intelligence and our common will to bend the trend of CO_2 emissions.