

un autre projet est possible

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Press Release – 2017 06 06

Macron says he wants to save the climate? Fighting climate change begins at home.

While President Emmanuel Macron has rightly denounced US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement, the French government has given its support to a massive shopping and leisure complex on the outskirts of the capital city of France that is completely inconsistent with its commitment to fight global warming.

« Only a stone's throw away from the venue where the Paris Accord was signed in December 2015, some 80 hectares (appr. 200 acres) of agricultural farmland, which are considered the most fertile in Europe, could be lost forever if the government decides to go ahead with the project », Bernard Loup, head of the Group to Save the Gonesse Triangle, said on Monday.

The retail giant Auchan Holding SA and Chinese billionaire Wang Jianlin's Dalian Wanda Group Co have received support from national and local authorities to start the construction in 2019 of EuropaCity, a 3.1-billion euro (\$3.4 billion) shopping complex which would include more than 500 shops, an air-conditioned theme park and an indoor ski slope. A subway station, which would give access solely to the site, would cost French taxpayers one billion euros.

« Emmanuel Macron's strong reaffirmation of France's commitment to the Paris Accord must be praised. Yet words are not enough. Fighting climate change begins at home, and absurd projects such as EuropaCity, which destroy the climate, must be stopped », added Bernard Loup. « It would be a strong symbol. We all know that sustainable agricultural practices are a major factor in the fight against climate change: the soil absorbs carbon, regulates the microclimate and preserves air quality. The land in Gonesse is also a precious asset because one day the exorbitant price of oil will make it very difficult to bring food in from thousands of miles away. »

Among the opponents to Auchan's development, a group of leading urban planners and green entrepreneurs have imagined an alternative project to EuropaCity called CARMA (Cooperation for a Rural, Agricultural and Metropolitan Ambition, in French). They claim farmland on the Gonesse Triangle can be preserved and thousands of jobs created thanks to a training center for environmental jobs that would create career opportunities in sustainable building, renovation, and transportation.