



Brussels, 11.9.2019
COM(2019) 412 final

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL**

**on the 2019 Climate Action Summit hosted by the United Nations Secretary General in
New York**

Introduction

Climate change is a defining challenge of our generation and the EU has been at the forefront of negotiating a multilateral framework to respond to this global challenge. In 2015, the EU diplomacy played a leading role in brokering the historic and global Paris Climate Agreement. 195 countries agreed on a simple goal: to hand over to future generations a healthier planet and more prosperous, modern and fair societies. For the first time the UN system secured contributions from all countries to limit their emissions of greenhouse gases. All the world's largest emitters are now on board, including China, which alone accounts for more than one quarter of global emissions. The Paris Agreement sets a goal of limiting global average temperature rise to well below 2° Celsius while pursuing a limit of 1.5° C. It holds its Parties accountable through a robust transparency system that will track their progress in implementing their contributions, and requires Parties every five years to raise the level of ambition of their contributions in light of the latest science.

The EU has acted domestically with speed and decisiveness to put real actions behind the Paris Agreement commitments. At the start of this Commission mandate almost 5 years ago, President Juncker defined, as a clear priority to tackle climate change – to establish a resilient European Energy Union with a forward-looking Climate Change Policy to bring about a fair and just transition to a modern, climate neutral and competitive economy, while at the same creating opportunities for new jobs and sustainable growth. Climate action is also fundamental to achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

As a result of this policy, the EU is now the only large economy in the world that has fully translated into legislation the steps to meet its Paris Agreement pledges and will work to cut by at least 40% its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 preparing for a climate-neutral economy.

Today, the EU has arguably the most comprehensive and ambitious legislative framework in place, underpinned by its long-standing democratic and inclusive decision-making process. It is successfully transitioning towards a climate neutral economy – between 1990 and 2017 its greenhouse gas emissions fell by 23% while the economy grew by 58%. As our international partners intensify their own transition efforts, the interest in the EU model and policies grows, offering excellent openings for policy cooperation and economic diplomacy.

Despite changes in policy brought on by domestic political cycles, most notably in the United States, global support for the Paris Agreement remains strong, with all but one of the world's major economies continuing to endorse it. Nevertheless, it is clear that the global transition necessary to reach the Paris goals is not happening fast enough. The latest scientific reports, notably the 1.5 degrees Special Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)¹, confirm that the first round of Parties' contributions to Paris are not sufficient to meet the Agreement's goals. As result of these developments the public concern is growing

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report 2018 on Global Warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty.

and citizens are calling for more ambitious and decisive action on climate change, as confirmed by the recent European elections and Eurobarometer survey on climate change².

It is against this backdrop that the United Nations Secretary General (UNSG) António Guterres is hosting a Climate Action Summit in New York on 23 September 2019, the day before the opening of the UN General Assembly. It will be followed by the UN Sustainable Development Goals Summit on 24 and 25 September.

The objective of the Climate Action Summit is to boost climate ambition and accelerate action to implement the Paris Agreement. In particular, the Summit seeks to encourage Parties to raise the level of ambition of their existing emissions reduction contributions and to submit long-term strategies, in time for the meeting of the Conference of the Parties (to the Paris Agreement) at the end of 2020. The Summit will be an important opportunity for Heads of State and Government to present their plans for raising ambition and progress to date, as well as for subnational governments, business, public and private finance, in addition to civil society, to send strong market and political signals and inject momentum in the “race to the top”. The United Nations Secretary General Guterres has called for all Heads of State and Government to attend the Summit and has stressed at the same time: “Don’t come with a speech, come with a plan”.

A European Union Committed to Accelerated Climate Ambition

The EU and Member States, true to their commitment to multilateral action rooted in science, are actively preparing to agree and communicate by early 2020 an EU Long-Term Strategy with the objective of achieving climate neutrality by 2050. Coming forward with such strategies by 2020 is the expectation that the Paris Agreement set for all participating governments. In preparation of the EU long-term strategy and in order to allow for all EU Member States to analyse and internalise the vision, the European Commission responded to the request of the European Council with the Communication “A Clean Planet for All”³ already in November 2018. For the past year this has been the subject of an in-depth democratic discussion at European, national and local level. In addition to the EU level, the EU Member States are also required to prepare their own national long-term strategies under the Energy Union Governance Regulation.

A large majority of the EU’s Member States have already endorsed the EU objective of climate neutrality by 2050⁴ and further discussions are being carried out in view of reaching a consensus over the next few months. The European Council invited the Council and the Commission to advance work on the conditions, the incentives and the enabling framework to be put in place so as to ensure a transition to a climate neutral EU. The European Council will finalize its guidance before the end of the year in order to submit the EU’s long-term strategy to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in early 2020. It also invited the European Investment Bank to step up its activities in support of climate

² Special Eurobarometer 490 “Climate Change”

³ 28/11/2018 - COM (2018) 773 - A Clean Planet for all - A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy.

⁴ EUCO 9/19 European Council Conclusions of 20 June 2019.

action. The European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions have already endorsed the climate neutrality goal by 2050.

Climate neutrality by 2050, a more ambitious target than the pathway prescribed by the IPCC Special report on 1.5 degrees, is for the EU an investment and modernisation challenge as well as a great opportunity to get a “first mover” competitive edge, create new jobs and increase standards of living for people. To pursue a lesser plan would be an abdication of our longstanding global climate ambition and missing an economic opportunity for the EU.

The European Union budget is at the centre of making our climate ambition come to life. The European Commission proposed the EU budget of over EUR 1 trillion for the period 2021-2027⁵, currently under negotiations. The European Commission has proposed that at least 25% of the EU expenditure will be dedicated to climate mitigation and adaptation activities, including the European Union’s budget for international and development cooperation. Consequently, the future budget will incentivise climate-friendly action in all policy domains and will be subject to checks to ensure we do not fund investments that are not in line with the transition towards climate neutrality. Horizon Europe will reshape the direction of European Research & Innovation, with climate action at its core. InvestEU, the Connecting Europe Facility, all our cohesion and the EU’s rural development funds will be available to provide incentives for the infrastructure and productive investments we need in all parts of the EU.

The deep modernisation process will have to be managed well, ensuring a fair and socially acceptable transition for all in the spirit of inclusiveness and solidarity. Both the EU and the Member States must take into account social implications from the outset and deploy all relevant policies to mitigate this challenge. The EU budget, employment and social policies as well as cohesion policies can reduce economic, social and territorial disparities across the Union. Ongoing regional initiatives launched by the Juncker Commission, such as the platform and pilot projects on coal and carbon-intensive regions in transition mark a step in this direction. New initiatives to comprehensively address the social and economic costs of climate-policies driven modernisation like the Just Transition Fund are in preparation. The full implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan⁶ contributes to EU efforts to develop a climate neutral economy, combining resource efficiency and competitiveness⁷. It is also essential to ensure full consistency and mutual support across all relevant policy areas, such as air quality and biodiversity. Climate and environment policies must go hand in hand.

It is crucial also that the private sector aligns with this vision and that authorities make progress on the enabling framework that allows the private sector to invest in a climate neutral economy worldwide. With the set of sustainable finance measures introduced in the European Union Capital Markets Union, the European Union is also spearheading international efforts to redirect capital flows towards our climate goals and to manage financial risks stemming from climate change. Furthermore, the European Union is preparing jointly with other partners an initiative to be launched at the UN Climate week in New York,

⁵ Commission Proposal for the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for the years 2021 to 2027.

⁶ Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Closing the loop - An EU action plan for the Circular Economy, COM (2015) 614

⁷ Report from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan, COM (2019) 190

called “the International Platform on Sustainable Finance”, to coordinate regulatory policy tools for capital markets. The platform aims at exchanging best practices and bringing together different initiatives on environmentally sustainable finance and investment, including green taxonomies, disclosures, standards (e.g. green bonds), labels and benchmarks.

The European Union believes that building coherent international strategies such as these, with partners, such as the G20, is the best way to stimulate investment at the scale required for the most important economic transition of our times and align capital flows with the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The EU and its Member States have put the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals at the heart of their external action. Likewise, the EU’s array of legally binding trade and cooperation agreements will continue to include robust provisions to promote climate action and implement the Paris Agreement.

The European Union Continues to Deliver

The European Union message at the Climate Summit will be about more than just setting ambitious targets. It will be about solid and comprehensive implementation. The European Union has already over-achieved its 2020 greenhouse gas emissions reduction target and has completed its unique binding legislative framework that will allow us to over-deliver on our climate target for 2030, including a mechanism for governance, monitoring and verification.

For the first time, the EU also equipped itself with an Energy Union governance framework, where Member States have to establish integrated national energy and climate plans (NECPs) for the period 2021-2030, in order to show how they can meet the 2030 targets. The Governance regulation provides for transparency, through a wide consultation on the national plans, and for increased cooperation between Member States to achieve the Energy Union’s goals. The first draft plans have been assessed, identifying areas of improvement to ensure the delivery of the 2030 targets and to be on the path towards climate neutrality in the longer term. It has been estimated that, when fully implemented, the measures will enable the European Union to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by around 45% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2030, going further than the European Union objective as laid down in the European Union Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to cut emissions by at least 40% by 2030.

At the same time, the European Union Adaptation Strategy⁸ has encouraged national, regional and local adaptation action to make Europe more climate-resilient since 2013. The lessons we have learned by increasing our resilience to climate change impacts, such as climate proofing of infrastructure and investments, synergies with disaster risk reduction, including via RescEU⁹, wider uptake of green solutions on cities, innovative use of spatial data – will also help our international partners to enhance their own resilience. Going further, the European Commission will look even more closely at how climate risks may affect financial stability or social cohesion.

⁸ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions An EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change COM(2013) 216 final.

⁹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions “Strengthening EU Disaster Management: rescEU, Solidarity with Responsibility” COM(2017) 773 final.

Furthermore, according to the IPCC's and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services' latest scientific knowledge, there are no lasting solutions to climate change without greater attention to nature-based solutions including healthy and resilient forests. In this regard, the European Union is also working with partner countries to step up action to address deforestation and forest degradation in line with the recent Communication¹⁰ of the European Commission on this matter. Additionally, the IPCC is currently finalising its report on the oceans and the cryosphere.

For the European Union all this is an investment in our prosperity and in preparing for a sustainable, climate neutral and circular economy.

The European Union as the Largest Climate Finance Donor

Conscious that the EU's emissions make up only around 9% of the global total, the EU will be stepping up its outreach and cooperation, financial and technical, to all partner countries. NDCs will lie at the core of our support. The EU is leading the global transition towards an inclusive, fair and climate-neutral global economy for all.

Working with international partners and sharing experiences to inspire global climate action is and continues to be a priority, and we are leading by example. The European Union remains the world's leading donor of development assistance: EUR 74.4 billion in 2018, with climate action increasingly integrated, stepping up our support to the implementation of partner countries' NDCs with economic assistance, capacity building, strong advocacy and leadership in multilateral negotiations.

Climate change affects the most vulnerable countries disproportionately. The European Union is the world's biggest climate finance donor. Providing over 40% of the world's public climate finance, the EU and its Member States' contributions have more than doubled since 2013, exceeding EUR 20 billion annually¹¹. Here too, the EU's approach to global climate action, including through the European Investment Bank and increased funding for climate action from the next budget, will go well beyond the public sphere, with novel initiatives to catalyse and multiply private sector investment.

The European Union's External Investment Plan will be enhanced by the proposed 'European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus' with a capacity of EUR 60 billion to mobilise sustainable investments towards the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The European Union is committed to securing the success of the 2019 Climate Action Summit. We believe that our track record on climate action, our inclusive deliberations on a

¹⁰ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests" COM/2019/352 final.

¹¹ 2018/11/06/2018-ecofin-climate-finance-conclusions.

plan for achieving, not just targeting climate neutrality by 2050, our determination to implement climate commitments, already enshrined in binding European legislation, together make up a powerful plan for the Summit in September.

The European Union will be represented at the leaders' segment of the Climate Action Summit by the President of the European Council Donald Tusk. The coordination of Summit messages between the Member States and the EU institutions, as well as the exceptionally high attendance of EU leaders at the Summit, will enable the EU to transmit comprehensively and coherently the European story of ambition, action, unity and determination, whilst recognising the richness of approaches applied by the individual Member States.

A Chair's summary will capture the initiatives and commitments showcased at the Climate Action Summit. Follow-up arrangements will be put in place to track progress, ensure accountability and facilitate implementation of the Summit proposals. This will be taken forward by the United Nations system including the UNFCCC.

All this forms a solid basis for even higher EU climate ambition. Following the recent elections to the European Parliament and the formation of the new European Commission, the EU will pursue the domestic debate on how to further raise ambition and to achieve the goals that have been set, while leaving no people or regions behind. Our expectation is that we will continue to take further bold and ambitious actions building on our significant achievements so far.

Climate action indeed features prominently in the Political guidelines of the Commission President-Elect Ursula von der Leyen as part of the proposal for a European Green Deal aiming at making the EU the world's first climate neutral continent¹². The threefold goal of 1) firming up the long-term objective of climate neutrality by 2050 in binding legislation, 2) increasing climate ambition in the short to medium-term, in synergy with preserving Europe's natural environment and 3) strengthening international action to encourage third countries to greater ambition in fighting climate change will be a key priority for the incoming Commission.

¹² Political guidelines for the next Commission (2019-2024) - "A Union that strives for more: My agenda for Europe" - 16 July 2019: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en.pdf.