

Solidarity and the Green Deal

Delivering a social Green Deal to all of Europe's citizens

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The European Commission is the EU's politically independent executive arm. The Commission helps to shape the EU's overall strategy, proposes new EU laws and policies, monitors their implementation and manages the EU budget. The Commission's work is steered by a College of Commissioners, and led by its President.

Honourable Members, I've listened very carefully to this debate and I'm really excited by the fact that this Parliament has expressed such broad support for the European Green Deal. This is a great start of what is going to be quite a bumpy road, where we will need both institutions to concentrate on all the elements that we need to make the Green Deal work.

Let me say here today: I want to congratulate Greta Thunberg for having been nominated Person of the Year by Time Magazine. I think this is a great sign that this generation – our kids – are leading the way. And as a parent, there's nothing more beautiful than when you see that your kids are leading the way.

But that's not the only reason why I believe we need to act now. The reason I believe we need to act now is because the facts are staring us in the face. And I think if you are a responsible Member of Parliament, if you're in a responsible position in the Commission, if you're a citizen, if you're a parent, you do not have the luxury to ignore the facts. Look at what's happening in Greenland. Look at what's happening globally with our climate. Look at the desertification. Look at the erratic weath-

er. Look at the people suffering because of this erratic weather across Europe. Look at what's happening to our biodiversity as we speak. We do not have the luxury to ignore this anymore.

»Impact assessment will be an essential element of our analysis.«

And look at another thing that's happening. We are in the middle of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. That is going to change our economy, our industry whether we like it or not, whether we act or not. So the question we have to face today as Europeans is this: are we going to try and be masters of this momentous change, of this paradigm shift, or are we just going to let it happen? And then others will be the masters of it and we can just be the subjects of what others will decide. This is the fundamental question we have to answer.

And the Green Deal is not a blueprint. It's a roadmap. It's an extended open hand to you and to all the stakeholders, whether it's businesses, whether it's NGOs, whether it's trade unions, whether it's citizens, whether it's cities, whether it's regions to be part of a discussion of how we are going to reorganise our society in a just way, so

that it reflects the values we want to stand for.

And we need to do this because Mother Earth is fed up with this behavior. And you know, she was able to exist for millennia without human beings, she will be able to exist for other millennia without human beings. We better make sure we create an existence in balance with her, so that we can continue to exist as human beings for millennia. And this is the responsibility we have before our kids.

But let me make a point because it was said often: this is costly. Yes, but don't forget what the cost is of not acting. We see it every day. It was also said we have to be sure we take the right decisions. Yes, that is why every proposal the Commission is going to put on the table will be assessed for impact. Impact assessment will be an essential element of our analysis, but we will do this in a very, very speedy and comprehensive way.

For instance, to determine exactly what the reduction by 2030 should be, we want to have an impact assessment on that, but we want to be ready with that impact assessment early in the summer next year, so that the European Union is extremely well prepared, with a Climate Law for COP26 in Glasgow, so that we can lead the way.

I bring back a message from Madrid, the COP, where I'm going to go back and present the Green Deal tomorrow. The message is this: we need European leadership. The message is also this: some of us are insecure what we should do, but if Europe leads we might go in the same direction. I had meetings with Ministers of many countries saying: climate neutrality by 2050 is a good idea, we might do it the

same way. With the Chinese we're in debate. Are we going to have collective global leadership on this, yes or no? We need to work on that because if we do it together, the impact will be much bigger.

»If this is not a social Green Deal, the Green Deal will not happen.«

But at the end of the day, it is very important that this Parliament takes this into hand, and makes sure that Parliament has a leading role, together with the Commission, to convince our Member States in Council to do the right thing. And if we begin, by enshrining in law, that by 2050 Europe will be climate-neutral, then we can take steps back until today and just chart the map that we need to get there. And then we will discuss the measures we will need to take – whether it's on ETS, whether it's on emissions, whether it's on taxation, whether it's on all sorts of other measures to make our industries circular, to make sure that there are jobs in this new economy.

But finally, I want to add one thing which is very, very important. You know, the biggest risk here I see, is that those who

are most vulnerable in climate change, see themselves also as most vulnerable in the answer to climate change, so that they start resisting the Green Deal, because they feel that they are vulnerable. And at the end of the day, if they resist the Green Deal and they stop it, they will be the first victims of the consequences of not doing the right thing.

So that's why – and this is a fundamental point – if this is not a social Green Deal, the Green Deal will not happen. If this is not a Green Deal where the most vulnerable regions in Europe – coal-mining regions and others – do not see solidarity from other parts of Europe, it will not happen. So we need a level of solidarity with vulnerable individuals and vulnerable regions, to make sure the Green Deal can be delivered for all our citizens. And at the end, because “Man on the Moon” was quoted, so I obviously thought of the famous moon speech by John F. Kennedy, and let me just amend it slightly and end with that: “We choose to go for climate neutrality in 2050, and do the other things. Not because they are easy, but because they are hard. Because that goal will serve to organise and measure the best of our energies and skills. Because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept. One we are unwilling to postpone. And one which we intend to win.” Thank you.

This text is from Executive Vice-President Timmermans' closing speech delivered at the European Parliament Plenary Session on the European Green Deal, in Brussels on December 11, 2019.

G20 governance of climate change through nature-based solutions

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The G20 Research Group is a global network of scholars, students and professionals in the academic, research, business, non-governmental and other communities who follow the work of the G20 leaders, finance ministers and central bank governors, and other G20 institutions. It is directed from Trinity College and the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto.

INTRODUCTION

Nature-based solutions (NBS) is a relatively new concept in global governance. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (n.d) defines NBS as “actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits.”¹ Much of the work on NBS is on urban environments, as the majority of the global population will be living in cities in the coming decades.² There are eight NBS principles, developed by the IUCN. They bring together existing ecological concepts while offering novelty in their focus on integration, on landscape scale and on coordinated actions that address complexity, including interactions between ecological, social, legal, institutional and political systems.³ NBS is therefore relevant to the UN 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with SDG 13 on climate change at the center. NBS is estimated to provide 37% of climate mitigation until 2030.⁴ It is also important for adaptation