



## European Commission - Speech [Check Against Delivery]



### **Speech by President von der Leyen at the Global Town Hall 2021**

Brussels, 20 November 2021

Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first of all thank the Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia for the invitation. It doesn't happen very often to address such a numerous and qualified audience, from so many different countries.

Today all of humanity faces many of the same challenges. We all want to end this long pandemic. We all want an economic recovery that is built on solid foundations. We are all concerned by the rise in energy prices. And we all see the impact of climate change on each one of our countries. Our success depends entirely on whether we can get together and focus on our shared interests.

This is true even for regions like ours – that are geographically distant from one another. Just think about these simple facts. Trade exchanges between Europe and the Indo-Pacific region are higher than between any other regions in the world. And 40 per cent of Europe's foreign trade flows through the South China Sea. The Indo-Pacific produces 60 per cent of the global GDP, but also 60 per cent of global CO2 emissions.

What happens on your side of the world has massive implications for Europe. And vice versa. So we care about cooperation with Asia. And we also care about cooperation within your region. It is positive that President Biden and President Xi met virtually recently. They agreed on possible fields of cooperation such as climate action. And we hope that this dialogue will continue and help to deal with important issues concerning your region and beyond.

The military build-up in the Indo-Pacific waters and along its shores has been a constant feature of the last few years. Military spending in the region has risen like nowhere else in the world. New weapons have been tested, new bases have been built. And this can only threaten stability and growth, well beyond your region.

For Europe, the respect of international law and international agreements is the foundation of a peaceful world. We are always ready to stand up for our values. At the same time, Europe's engagement in the Indo-Pacific seeks cooperation beyond geopolitical divides. In these times of shared challenges, we are offering to work with every country that wishes to do so, when our interests coincide.

Today, I would like to focus on three promising fields for our cooperation with countries in the Indo-Pacific.

First, vaccines to end the pandemic.

Second, climate action.

And third, creating new links between our regions, both physical and digital.

On vaccines: At the last G20 in Rome, we Europeans insisted to agree on a common target – to vaccinate 70 per cent of the global population by mid-next year. We did that because we know that we can only get out of this pandemic together. If the virus keeps spreading even just in one world region, new variants may emerge. The pandemic will only be over when all continents are safe. Likewise, this year has shown us how interconnected our economies are. Allow me to use one example you are all familiar with.

Last September, there was a surge in COVID cases in South East Asia. Many factories in your part of the world had to shut down. The economic shockwaves spread to the whole world. Global supply chains for cars, computers and smartphones were disrupted, because of the lack of electronic components. Not only is our health connected. But also our economic recovery. So we are really glad that the headline goal of Indonesia's upcoming G20 Presidency will be "Recovering Together, Recovering Stronger".

The first step towards a strong recovery is equitable global access to COVID vaccines. This was

Europe's policy from the very outset of the crisis. When you read about vaccine diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific, Europe is not the first power to be mentioned by media reports. But let me give you a few figures. From December 2020, the European Union has exported over 550 million doses of COVID vaccines to countries in Asia-Pacific.

All in all, we have exported almost 1.2 billion doses to the rest of the world – more than we have used inside Europe. Even if we are a far-away continent, we have been an essential part of Asian vaccine supplies.

Beyond exports, Europe has also been a strong supporter of global vaccine solidarity. We were among the leading forces behind the creation of COVAX – the global facility providing vaccines to low- and middle-income countries. The European Union and its Member States – we call ourselves “Team Europe” – have contributed over one third of the COVAX budget. And roughly one third of COVAX doses are going to Asia-Pacific.

Yet we know that we need to step up the world's vaccine manufacturing capacities. This is why, in our new Indo-Pacific strategy, we propose to work together on pharmaceutical supply chains. Europe wants to be your partner in ending the pandemic and strengthening the world's health infrastructure for the future.

Second, on climate action. By the end of this decade, more than 70 per cent of the rise in global energy demand will come from the Indo-Pacific. The question we all face is: can Asia get the energy it needs, in a way that is sustainable for our planet and for your environment? I am convinced that the answer is a strong “yes”. Because this is what the European experience shows.

Since 1990, Europe's economy grew by 60 per cent, while our CO2 emissions went down by 30 per cent. Sustainable growth is possible if we invest decisively in a cleaner economy.

So when I look at the outcome of COP26 in Glasgow, the glass is only half full. On the one hand, climate neutrality is now a shared global goal. And we have also set an intermediate target – to cut emissions by 45 % by 2030. On the other hand, we are still not on track to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Many countries still lack the necessary level of ambition. On top of that, an agreement on phasing-out coal power was watered down in the eleventh hour. And industrialised nations failed to commit enough resources to help developing countries in the transition. Europe fulfilled its promise, but others did not.

So, what next after Glasgow? Europe will keep working to speed up the transition towards a clean economy. For instance, in Glasgow we announced a new contribution to the ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance Facility. This Facility is an investment fund that we have been supporting for a few years now. And it has already financed some important projects across the region, such as a massive solar park in Cambodia, which is producing the cheapest solar energy in South-East Asia. There is a sustainable way to grow. And Europe wants to be your partner, towards a carbon-neutral and circular economy, in our mutual interest.

This leads to my third point: what does Europe have to offer on connectivity and infrastructure? When we invest in big infrastructure abroad, we do care about making business. But we also care about respecting the environment. We care about workers' rights and preventing the exploitation of children. We care about users' rights in the digital world and guaranteeing that they always have control over their data. And we care about the financial sustainability of every single project. In a partnership with Europe, what you see is what you get. We want to create links, not dependencies.

These are the principles that will underpin our new connectivity Strategy, called Global Gateway. The Strategy will build on the Connectivity Partnerships that we have established with India and Japan, and the Ministerial Statement on Connectivity with ASEAN. The Strategy will focus on creating the sustainable connections of the future. For instance, new international markets for clean hydrogen. Or new partnerships in the digital field.

Countries like India and Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore are powerhouses when it comes to new technologies, from artificial intelligence to quantum computing. And we share a similar approach to these new technologies, one that is centred on human beings and their rights. For likeminded partners like us, cooperation on digital innovation should be a no-brainer. The opportunities for future-oriented connectivity cooperation are countless. And to support it, we will invest through our Global Gateway.

The Indo-Pacific is home to some of the largest democracies in the world, including Indonesia. We share many of the same values. We are open democracies built on diversity, and it is no chance that Indonesia and the European Union share the same motto: “United in diversity”.

We all want to build an international order based on rules, not on confrontation. One where conflicts are settled peacefully. And where global commons, such as global trade routes, remain open and

accessible to all. These shared values are the main reason why Europe sees the Indo-Pacific as a partner of choice. Where other powers can only see new fault lines between changing spheres of influence, Europe sees new possibilities for cooperation on our mutual interests. And I look forward to Indonesia's G20 Presidency, to the upcoming ASEM Summit and our Summit with ASEAN next year, to expand our common work towards a sustainable recovery.

Europe wants to be more present and more active in your part of the world. To deepen trade links, strengthen global supply chains, to invest together in green and digital technologies. To keep our people safe. We are a world apart, but we feel like we have never been closer.

Thank you very much for the invitation and let me wish you a great discussion at this Global Town Hall.

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