



Frans Timmermans at Parliament Plenary session on the outcome of COP26 in Glasgow

Strasbourg, 24 November 2021

Opening remarks

Thank you, Mr. President, honourable Members.

COP26 did not solve the climate crisis but that was also not the purpose of COP26. It had to bring the objectives of the Paris Agreement within reach and allow us to start implementing this deal. This it did. This COP sharpened our focus and gave us momentum. I believe it does represent clear progress. I believe we're now traveling in the right direction, a direction set two years ago by the European Union.

The Glasgow COP embraced the highest level of ambition of the Paris Agreements as our common target. We now have a global consensus on the need to limit climate change to 1.5 degrees. Ten days after COP26 this almost seems like a given but ten days before we began, the mantra was still below two degrees, and some countries even challenged the fact that Paris ever spoke of 1.5.

In addition, countries that do not have national determined contributions in line with this 1.5 degree target will have to come back next year to deliver the required update. For the first time, the parties of COP26 agreed to phase down coal and fossil fuel subsidies. Whatever you may think about the precise language that was necessary to get the whole package over the finish line, this is a big win. Of course, if you compare the phase down with the initial formulation to phase out, you're disappointed. But as Greenpeace said in Glasgow, changing a word doesn't change the signal.

The era of coal is ending!

Before Glasgow the commission set three objectives. One to push for emission cuts that brings us within Paris territory with NDCs that keep global warming well below two degrees while aiming for 1.5. Second, to close the gap on the \$100 billion climate finance goal, while ramping up support for adaptation. And third, to complete the Paris rulebook so that we can keep track of progress and hold countries to account. The Paris rulebook, which seems like an esoteric subject sometimes, but it's essential to have carbon markets actually function in a way we want them to function. On all these three issues, we saw clear progress.

Two years ago in the COP in Madrid, the EU laid down our ambition for climate neutrality by 2050. At that stage, there was little to no movement from other major emitters in the G20. China, US, but also Japan, South Korea, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and others. Since then, each of these countries has announced targets of their own, varying from climate neutrality in 2050 to net zero carbon emissions in 2060 and in a single case 2070, India. 90% of the global economy is now on a net zero trajectory, that was only 30% a year ago.

We went into the COP on track for 2.7 degrees, way too much, but a lot less than three or four degrees we were headed for in Paris. And after COP for the very first time we have a shot at staying below two degrees now. We will see in the coming weeks what the actual number is, but we still have a shot at staying below two degrees. I will not take into my narrative the 1.8 mentioned by the International Energy Agency, let's see in the coming weeks when we do the calculation where we are, but we have a chance of staying below two degrees.

Moreover, COP26 agreed to accelerate our actions still this decade and revisit NDCs next year with a focus on the 1.5 degrees. This new marker on the calendar is due to a push from the EU to keep the pressure on, because the World Leaders Summit made clear that with the right pressure, ambition levels will in fact go up.

Over 1/3rd of all global financing comes from the EU and its Member States. We are doing our share and more, and we continue asking others to do the same.

Heading into the COP there was still a gap of about \$20 billion on the developed world's commitment towards the developing world. This is why in this house the President of the Commission committed

an additional €4 billion to climate finance. It pressured others to do the same or follow suit. Shortly after our commitment, the United States announced their own \$11.4 billion commitment.

During Glasgow, other donors added to this to bring us closer to this goal and we may reach it next year instead of 2023. We also started to look beyond 2025 and long-term needs. Adaptation finance will at least double, and we will start a dialogue to discuss finance for loss and damage.

Glasgow also strengthened the global network of agencies that provide immediate relief and assistance to countries that already suffer from the consequences of the climate crisis. And here I must say the EU and our Member States played a leading role. Four Member States committed a total of \$25 million to the Santiago network for its functioning and I think this is an important signal.

The issue of loss and damage will grow in importance in future COPs, and we should engage in all sincerity with those who already today suffer from climate-induced catastrophe. If we really want to succeed at the next COP in Sharm El-Sheikh, we now have to work closely especially with our sister continent of Africa in preparing this; on adaptation and on finance, on carbon sinks, on how to best have nature-based solutions, on how to help them in their energy transition. All these things are crucial, starting now, if we want Sharm El-Sheikh to be a success.

I already mentioned the completion of the Paris rulebook, seems like a technical matter but it's of essential importance for carbon markets to start to work. Because the essence of a global approach to decarbonisation is putting a price on carbon, and you have to be able to compare the way we do that for carbon markets to work well. That now is possible because we can close the rulebook because it is agreed.

So what does this mean for the EU? Glasgow confirmed that the EU is a global leader and a necessary bridge builder. Our climate diplomacy, supported by credible policies and commitments, our carefully nurtured climate dialogues with countries like Japan, China, Turkey our outreach to others like India, Brazil, Indonesia, have helped to push all major emitters to step up their ambition. Each of these countries will roll out and accelerate its own green transition.

European companies who are already frontrunners in renewables, in hydrogen, in circular economy stand to benefit. Think for example of India, which committed to reach 500 gigawatts in renewable energy by 2030. That is a massive, massive opportunity, also an economic opportunity, for European industry.

Honourable Members, climate action knows no quick fixes. It will never be solved in a single conference but the climate crisis is accelerating, and so should we. Fighting this crisis requires constant effort and unrelenting pressure on all governments, especially the major emitters. And it requires everybody's participation. That is why it is also good that this COP strengthened the involvement of indigenous peoples, the youth and local governments.

Now we must set our sights on Sharm El-Sheikh as I said. Getting Fit for 55 adopted ahead of next year's COP will mean that yet again, the European Union is putting pressure on others to step up their game. All are following the fact that we are the only ones who have a real plan to get us to our emission reductions, legally binding emission reductions by 2030 and 2050.

In Europe, we must keep up the legislative work. You are so, so much in charge now with the Council to make it happen. We've come a long way, my friends, but we still have a very, very, very long way to go if we want to get where we need to be. Our situation, and I have to say this, our situation is dire but it's not hopeless.

What needs to be done is bloody hard. Much harder than most are willing to acknowledge today. But it is a path we must walk, and walk it with speed and determination for all our sakes, but first and foremost for the sake of our children and grandchildren. It must be done, it can be done, it will be done. And please make it personal. Think of people you love. Think of people you want to act for. I think of my kids. I think of my grandson.

Closing remarks

Honourable members, let me react to some of the things that were said.

First, mythical cost of the transition, and that climate policy is ideological. I think by now we can agree that denying the climate crisis is ideological. Science is clear. The evidence is clear. One would have to be blind not to see what is happening in our natural environment, globally, everywhere. One would have to be blind not to want to read the report of the Global Climate Panel, which is so clear. And the only reason we made such progress in Glasgow is because all countries on Earth have now seen the devastating effect of 1.1 degree increase of temperature in relation to pre-industrial levels.

That is why we now have the 1.5 enshrined in our decisions and that we have to insist on updating the NDCs for next year. I would implore, I would ask all of you, wherever you're from, if you talk

about the cost of the transition in the same breath look at the cost of non-transition, which is so much higher. Not just in financial terms, but in human terms.

What are you going to say dear friends from the ECR to the miners in Silesia if you just say stay put don't change. What are you going to say to those even from your party in Wielkopolska and other parts of Poland who are engaging in this transition, who have the audacity to say to their voters, guys, there is no future in coal, and we need to change. Please be as audacious as they are. And explain that this transition is necessary for our survival, and that the longer we wait with this transition, the higher the cost will be.

And, as Robert has just said, Robert Biedroń just said, look at how many, 400,000 Europeans die prematurely every year because of bad air quality. They deserve better from us. So please, when you talk about the cost, talk about all the cost. And not seeing the cost of non-transition, that is ideological. Facing the climate crisis is science.

With all due respect to the right side of Parliament, it is great that there are no longer, hardly any climate deniers in your camp. But you came a bit late to the party, so others are a bit wary of whether this is a genuine. But I say on my behalf, it is genuine. Also because the industry understands this and are moving in this direction.

The second point I wanted to make is about the other countries. Two years ago it was a lonely position to be in as European Union. The US had as leader a climate denier. China didn't want to do anything. Look at where we are now. They're all declaring carbon neutral, climate neutral goals. Even Russia has done that. Russia is even introducing the first pricing of carbon, which would have been unthinkable a year ago.

So the world is moving. And you are absolutely right. On our own, we will not get there, but our example is being followed. China is introducing an emissions trading system based on our emissions trading system. Other major economies know they will all have to put a price on carbon, so they will all be faced with a risk of carbon leakage, so they're all looking at systems such as CBAM and comparable systems to avoid carbon leakage.

Our solidarity with the developing world was clear in Glasgow. We pushed others such as the Americans who didn't want to do that to do more on adaptation finance. We put the money on the table when it was necessary to do that.

Somebody mentioned Vanuatu, 300,000 People at huge risk, they were well represented with 32 delegates. That is the advantage of UNFCCC, they do represent more widely those who are most vulnerable. Vanuatu had more representatives at COP than some of our member states. And I think that's a good thing so that their voices are well heard.

We will have to look at many other measures to keep the developing world on our side. We need to look in the IMF what we can do with SDRs to mobilize them to help climate finance. Wonderful leaders such as the prime minister of Barbados, Mia Motley has given us the direction where we need to go. We need to listen to them, we need to make sure we give them, we amplify their voice, and we give them the solutions they need.

Et finalement en français, par ce que c'est surtout dans la presse française, et ici dans les débats les francophones, qu'on insiste sur l'Europe divisé. L'Europe n'était pas divisé à la COP. Et au début on disait : 'l'Europe est divisée, on ne la voit pas, elle négocie pas' etc. Ça on ne le dit plus par ce que c'est évident que l'Europe était très présente.

Et je dois ici rendre hommage à la Présidence Slovène, par ce que c'est grâce à la Présidence Slovène que j'ai pu négocier tout le temps au nom de toute l'Union Européenne. C'est grâce aux réunions qu'on a eues avec tous les ministres. Aucun Ministre est intervenu dans les débats plénières, on m'a laissé la parole au nom des tous les États Membres de l'Union Européenne. C'est ça qui a fait la force de l'Union Européenne. On était pas divisé.

Et maintenant on arrive avec un autre argument: le nucléaire. 'Le nucléaire prouve qu'on est divisé en tant qu'européens.' Le choix énergétique des États Membres est un choix souverain. Il y aura des États Membres qui voudront avoir le nucléaire, il y aura des États Membres qui ne voudront pas. Mais cela n'empêche pas qu'on ait des buts en commun pour décarboner notre économie pour arriver à la neutralité climatique en 2050.

Donc ne laissez pas vous dire qu'on est divisé. On a montré pouvoir être des leaders à la COP. On a montré qu'on a des projets que d'autres n'ont pas encore. On est copié partout dans le monde. On a vu, aussi les émetteurs majeurs rejoindre nos buts. Donc oui, c'est vrai, on est loin d'où on doit être. C'est vrai on a un travail immense à faire et ça sera terriblement difficile. Mais il faut convaincre tout le monde, c'est bien d'avoir un but en 2050 ou en 2060, mais comme l'a dit Camus, la vraie générosité envers l'avenir consiste à tout donner au présent. Merci.

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