



Press remarks by President von der Leyen on the occasion of the adoption of the European Climate Law

Brussels, 4 March 2020

Good afternoon,

I am pleased to tell you that the Commission has just adopted our proposal for the first ever European Climate Law. This proposal sets in stone our objective to be climate neutral in 2050. And 2050 is no longer impossibly distant to imagine and my children will be a bit younger than I am now when we have 2050. So, as I have a glimpse of the possible environment they will likely experience, this glimpse is pretty sobering if we do not act now. And the science is very clear. Climate is part of the natural world that sustains us. And this natural world is severely endangered. It is high time to act and this Climate Law is part of the European contribution to this action. It will be our compass for the next 30 years. And it will guide us every step of the way as we build a sustainable new growth model.

Before we adopted the Climate Law this morning, I was very pleased to invite a special guest to address the College of Commissioners. I am referring to Greta Thunberg. She will also be younger than many of us here in the room when we reach 2050. And Greta speaks for many of her generation when she calls for more action to tackle climate change. Climate change is caused by us, so in other words, it is up to us to make the turnaround.

And the European Climate Law puts in legislation our target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. It gives us the tools to measure the progress against this long-term goal. It gives us the possibility to take corrective measures, if this is necessary, if we fall behind our own goals. And we will draw the path from 2030 every step to 2050 that is necessary. This path, 2030 to 2050, will be done as soon as we have finished a very detailed impact assessment work. That is something, which is necessary, we have promised it to the Council, we have promised it to the European Parliament and I think it is very important to convince everybody to go down this path with us.

The text of the Climate Law, if you look at it, is actually rather short and it is rather simple. But what it commits us to is of the utmost importance: The Climate Law will oblige the European Union to take our climate goals into account in all future policy and legislation. It is a binding legal obligation. It offers predictability, it offers transparency to, for example, the European industry, to investors, to public authorities. And this is what they are calling for, this is what they ask us to do, because it gives them certainty about what needs to be achieved, and it gives them the certainty at what pace.

I see the climate transition as a huge opportunity for Europe – to get the first mover advantage. I know what European businesses are capable of. I know by experience that we are a continent of innovators and of pioneers and entrepreneurs. This Climate Law will set in stone Europe's position as a climate leader on the global stage.

I am also convinced that the Climate Law will inspire many of our partners to raise their own ambition, as we move towards the COP26 in Glasgow later this year. However, if some do slip behind with their Paris Agreement goals, we are also ready to protect our European industry from the risk of carbon leakage. That is why we have launched work today – including a public consultation – on a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. It will make sure that there is for our European industry a level playing field. This is necessary for them to engage in this transition. We will of course design this Mechanism with stakeholders – in Europe and beyond – in a very inclusive and a very transparent manner.

Europeans want to live on a continent that masters its own destiny and takes control of its own future. I think climate neutrality is our European destiny. And I think a competitive and sustainable economy is the best we can get for our European future. The European Climate Law is part of this ambition.

Thank you.

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