THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

Mr President

I wish to inform you that, on 11 December 2009, the VIIIth Committee (Environment) of the Chamber of Deputies approved the document - attached together with the opinion of the XIVth Committee (European Union Policies) - on the White Paper on adapting to climate change: towards a European framework for action (COM (2009) 147 final); the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the 2008 environment policy review (COM (2009) 304 final); and the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions on mainstreaming sustainable development into EU policies: 2009 review of the EU strategy for sustainable development (COM (2009) 400 final).

Dated: 12 January 2010
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Sent to: Mr Barroso, President of the European Commission

XVIth LEGISLATURE
CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES
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VIIIth STANDING COMMTTEE
(Environment, Regional Planning and Public Works)

FINAL DOCUMENT, UNDER ARTICLE 127 OF THE RULES OF THE CHAMBER ON:

the White Paper on adapting to climate change: towards a European framework for action (COM (2009) 147 final);

the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the 2008 environment policy review (COM (2009) 304 final); and

the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions on mainstreaming sustainable development into EU policies: 2009 review of the EU strategy for sustainable development (COM (2009) 400 final).

Approved on 11 December 2009

The VIIIth Committee,

Having examined, under Article 127 of the Rules of the Chamber, the proposed Community acts in question;

Having received the opinion, dated 3 December 2009, of the XIVth Committee (European Union Policies);

Whereas examination of the European Union documents in question represented a valuable opportunity to conduct a thorough review of the various aspects of climate change;

Given that:

with the approval of the "energy-climate" package by the European Council in December 2008, the European Union has shown in concrete terms its intention to take a leading role internationally;

the EU's efforts have not been confined merely to the identification of the objectives to be achieved but are already resulting in the preparation of legislative proposals setting out a set of specific measures designed, by 2020, to reduce emissions CO2 by 20% compared with the 1990 levels, and to improve energy efficiency by 20% (by making use of renewable sources and reducing energy consumption);

the EU intends to call on the other countries that are the main polluters to act in a similar fashion; the EU has even suggested the possibility of reducing CO2 emissions by 30% instead of 20% if other countries with high levels of CO2 emissions show the same willingness to do so;

the seriousness of the EU's approach may prove particularly useful at the conference that is taking place in Copenhagen with the specific aim of reaching a comprehensive agreement that commits all countries, not excluding (thanks to international support) those lagging behind in their development;

the future climate agreement must involve all the countries that can contribute most to the reduction of global emissions since, if Europe continues to act alone, the problem of climate change may not be resolved and European and Italian companies could become less competitive;

to this end, it is extremely important that, in the international arena, once the main emerging countries agree to make a binding commitment to participate in combating climate change, clear criteria are set out as to the comparability of the objectives such as, for example, the type and effectiveness of the means of achieving the objectives, the timetable and the reference years used to assess the actual reduction of emissions, and the ability to finance the reduction of emissions at national level and to purchase credits from the developing countries;

the transformation of our production systems and our way of life (from building technology to modes of transport) towards a more sustainable model, especially in environmental terms, represents a fundamental step not only in response to environmental protection requirements but also, in fact, to a large extent as a result of economic trends;

as on earlier occasions, this foreshadows a time of fundamental changes involving the adoption of new technologies and new ways of organising production processes offering ample opportunities for growth and development;

the most advanced and innovative part of the production system is already gearing up to adopt new production techniques which have less environmental impact; it is therefore necessary to support and facilitate this shift through the use of targeted and coherent policies and actions;

such policies should pursue a predominantly non-prescriptive approach, and should, in particular, encourage the development of new technologies and the dissemination of more environmentally friendly products;

to this end, we need a policy aimed not only at industry but also at all other areas where there is untapped potential for reducing energy consumption, such as road transport, lighting and heating, the agri-food sector, and the increased use of electric motors and cogeneration;

the transformation of production systems to ensure that they have less impact on the environment is also necessary on strategic grounds. The events of recent decades have demonstrated that the western economies cannot continue to allow their growth prospects to be dependent on the decisions of the countries that supply them with energy raw materials, since those countries have too often proved to be unreliable. Reducing dependence on fossil fuels is therefore necessary to ensure a framework for enhanced security of energy supply and, consequently, growth prospects for our economies;

the complexity and magnitude of the innovations to be introduced necessitate a comprehensive EU strategy for adaptation to climate change in order to ensure consistency between the different measures relating to the various sectors and the allocation of adequate resources, taking into account the fact that the choices to be made in this connection must not undermine the process of sustainable economic and social development that is the basis of civil society;

it is in any case clear that the transformation of European economies in such a way as to significantly reduce emissions of CO2 calls for the allocation of adequate resources within the EU financial framework for the next few years, along the lines of what some of our major partners, e.g. the US and China, are already doing;

to this end, it is also an important that there is a reallocation of Community resources, under the Community support framework for 2007-2013, to policies to encourage energy-saving initiatives and/or initiatives involving renewable sources;

the preparation of this strategy, of which the "climate-energy" package is the first step must be based on a careful assessment of the specific characteristics of each production system, the patterns of consumption and energy-saving opportunities, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses;

the common strategic guidelines needed at EU level must, however, take account of the fact that the Member States have widely differing situations, as regards the composition of the supply of energy products used and their sources of supply and in terms of the anticipated demand trend;

the fact that Italy is particularly vulnerable, on account of its high degree of dependence on supplies from abroad, and the fact that there is a marked prevalence of small and medium-sized firms that are often unable at present to make massive investments in innovation, makes it particularly urgent in our country to ensure that there are close links between institutions, the scientific world and the economic system;

our country's excellence track record in terms of energy efficiency, which is based on a wealth of knowledge, technology and tradition, is something on which we can count in our efforts to achieve the targets for reducing emissions and to increase the competitiveness of our goods and services in global markets, and in supporting a binding target for energy efficiency in Europe;

this is a task that involves an in-depth assessment to acquire an accurate and informative picture of the existing situation and the potential for development, as well as the positive factors and the critical elements in order to present the specific needs of our country to the competent EU institutions as soon as possible, as Italy's contribution to the development of a Community strategy;

more generally, it must be taken into consideration that Southern Europe and the Mediterranean are among the most vulnerable areas (especially with regard to marine and coastal systems, hydrogeological systems and land-related risks) and hence more in need of climate adaptation policies;

the data acquired during the hearings conducted were very useful for the analysis of the situation, confirming, firstly, the presence in the national production system of sectors with a high risk of carbon leakage and, secondly, considerable energy efficiency;

the hearings also provided information and specific suggestions regarding the priorities to be pursued, the most useful instruments and incentive mechanisms, the points of excellence in the Italian production system and the most serious shortcomings to be remedied in relation to the EU guidelines and the resources that may be available;

the hearings also highlighted the need to prepare, as other European countries have done, a national plan for adaptation to climate change, to be established with the active involvement of institutions and representatives of the production system and adequate scientific support;

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emphasising, in relation to the position of the Government as regards the preparation of legislative proposals and with regard to deliberations of the competent institutions, the need to promote initiatives, including ones of a legislative nature, the following six areas, which – in line with what emerged in the course of the hearings - could help to reduce emissions in an effective and sustainable way

highlighting the need, with regard sustainability, to mainstream environmental policies into other sectoral policies (transport, energy, infrastructure, research, and foreign policy) and to ensure greater synergy with the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs in order to make genuine progress along the path towards sustainable development;

stressing the importance of policies to encourage technological and product innovation in order to improve the climatic and environmental conditions and, at the same time, promote industrial development and employment opportunities;

considering that it is important to introduce, as recommended at the European level, indicators of the quality of life that go beyond GDP, such as the environmental balance sheet and sustainability to measure progress in terms of quality of development

In particular:

(1) energy and energy efficiency, through:

an increase by the Community institutions and Member States in the research funds for projects to develop new process and product technologies that can reduce environmental impact, especially with a view to investment in clean technologies in industry, construction and infrastructure with low emissions of CO2;

the introduction, also at national level, of a stable and sound medium to long-term incentive system, since the industrial system which will be investing in new technologies, particularly renewables, needs to be able to plan for the investments to be made ;

the relaunching of the industry 2015 programme in order to create a network of firms capable of exploiting the opportunities offered by the revolution in the sustainable economy;

adaptation of energy transmission and distribution infrastructure and the introduction of adaptation measures that could lead to an increase in the volumes of production of small generators to be connected to the distribution networks and enable the distribution networks to evolve into a configuration of active networks;

simplification and standardisation of procedures for issuing permits for facilities producing or using renewable energy resources and for individuals who avail themselves of structural assistance for the use of renewable sources, including a policy of "discrimination" that will reward the efficiency of plants according to their positioning and operating efficiency;

the use of renewable sources in synergy with each other and the use of energy storage systems to maintain steady production of electricity;

empowerment of the regions in order to achieve the national targets for energy planning, since the regional energy plans may be inconsistent with the national industrial development projects (regional burden-sharing);

encouragement of local energy-environment integration systems in order to make best possible use of available resources, supporting the development of indigenous renewable energy resources, such as the biodegradable fraction of waste, photovoltaics, thermal solar energy, geothermal energy and the development of research in the field of thin film photovoltaics, on the basis of which it would be possible to develop an Italian network of excellence;

new measures in the energy efficiency market, providing for:

modulating the contribution rate depending on the cost differential of the individual technologies to be promoted or, alternatively, varying the duration of measures for the purposes of obtaining white certificates;

gradually reducing incentives to support energy sources under the CIP6 scheme, and increasing incentives to support renewable energy sources;

broadening the definition of primary energy savings so as to extend the mechanism to include measures to improve the efficiency electricity and natural gas distribution networks;

improving the procedures for the certification of savings and the management of the processes involved in making the technical specifications required by the regulator more detailed;

setting energy efficiency standards for buildings, equipment, fuels and vehicles;

making the most of the potential for the re-industrialisation of sites through the use of local raw materials and agricultural waste;

(2) the environment, through:

the encouragement of studies and research related to climate change on the basis of updated models that allow the definition of clear criteria regarding the comparability of the objectives and of the deadlines for the international commitments to reduce emissions;

the concentration of research in a few national platforms capable of competing at European level for the allocation of EU funding;

support for research and for the use of the technologies that are necessary in order to reduce emissions, such as carbon capture and storage (CCS) and sustainable biofuels;

introduction for research graduates of subjects connected with "sustainable development and climate change" in order to stimulate new knowledge and insights in this area;

definition of a framework of measures to increase public awareness of the strategic nature of environmental policies and the essential importance of virtuous individual behaviour;

definition of a framework for action on environmental education aimed at schools, including through the involvement of businesses and environmental organisations;

the development of clear economic indicators to disseminate a culture of sustainable development;

the allocation of adequate resources to improve hydrogeological stability and review the urban structure, paying particular attention to the heat islands formed by large urban areas (Kyoto Club);

waste, through:

the formulation of a waste prevention policy;

a national programme on the life cycle of goods and products and communication and public education;

transposition of the Waste Framework Directive;

the timely preparation of the national prevention programme;

less use of landfills;

greater use of composting and of RDF in place of fossil fuels;

the introduction of collection and recycling in the context of the allocation of energy efficiency certificates;

the application of the same environmental requirements for all industrial facilities;

the ongoing revision of the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) Directive, which should confirm the approach underlying the legislation in question that has succeeded in guaranteeing a degree of flexibility for businesses whilst setting significant environmental objectives;

instruments that encourage research into and the development of new substances with a lower environmental impact, in the context of the REACH system;

(3) the water sector, through:

the review of the rules governing abstraction concessions, to ensure that the concession charge is based on the volumes used, including through the introduction of pricing instruments based on the optimum allocation of resources;

revision of the duration of concessions in the context of regional planning and in connection with the introduction of new technologies that enable more intelligent use to be made of water resources;

a review of minimum environmental flow of rivers in order to maintain flora and fauna, and especially for the conservation of biodiversity

a policy of encouraging the re-use of waste water, changing the rules in force so as to set the limit values according to the category of use

new resources for the Italian water network in order to avoid leakage, which at present is equivalent to 30% of the water resources in the network;

a system for monitoring and collecting data to assess the environmental performance of individual operators and the sector as a whole at least every six months

more modern facilities for the purification of waste water that is put back into bodies of water, thus implementing Directive 2000/60/EC which sets quality standards for bodies of water and Directive 272/91/EC that sets quality standards for waste;

a programme of measures to improve the ability of water infrastructure to cope with the water arising from heavy rainfall and extreme events resulting from climate change in general, in order to prevent mudslides, landslides, etc.;

(4) the transport sector, through:

the development of 'intelligent' networks which should be assigned a strategic role in the context of the objective of shifting traffic to less congested modes of transport, since innovative and technologically advanced systems can help to improve accessibility and sustainability, and ensure more effective use of existing infrastructure, with positive effects also on consumption

the introduction of measures to encourage the spread of electric and hybrid vehicles in public and private transport, especially in large urban centres, and promote alternative mobility systems such as trams and bicycle lanes

policies to encourage the use of public transport instead of private transport, accompanied by mobility policies - especially in the field of freight transport - that can help promote rail transport as opposed to road transport;

establishing permanent incentives for the scrapping of cars with a view to the purchase of vehicles with a low environmental impact;

(5) the building sector, through:

the introduction of regulatory instruments to make energy efficiency technology mandatory for the allocation of State or regional aid and to facilitate, through stable medium and long-term fiscal measures, the maintenance of existing buildings with a view to increasing their energy efficiency, the use of renewable resources, reducing the energy consumption of private buildings and of public buildings and for public lighting;

the introduction of incentives for the use of the best available technologies in plants, home automation and home interactivity, security, and savings in terms of energy resources and operating costs, as well as the energy certification of buildings;

increasing incentives for green public procurement (GPP), i.e. contracts that promote energy saving or that produce a reduced environmental impact;

(6) in agriculture, with reference to:

preparing a development model which focuses on land quality and integrated systems, on minimising resource use and promoting local resources, on paying attention to product life and promoting a culture of respect for the environment (with the revival of the "Made in Italy" campaign), on the basis of the promotion and voluntary adoption of eco-indicators that optimise the Italian model;

ensuring sustainable agricultural practices, such as the re-use of compost to replace chemical fertilisers to some extent, and bringing about improvements in terms of reduced water usage, fewer diseases and greater crop maximisation, as well as incentives, including through appropriate fiscal measures, for environmentally sustainable agricultural practices - such as organic farming - aimed at making a significant reduction in the use of pesticides.

ANNEX

OPINION OF THE XIVth COMMITTEE (EUROPEAN UNION POLICIES)

The XIVth Committee,

Having examined, under Article 127 of the Rules of the Chamber, the White Paper on adapting to climate change: towards a European framework for action (COM (2009) 147 final), the Commission Communication to the Council and the European Parliament on the 2008 environment policy review (COM (2009) 304 final.) and the Commission Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions on mainstreaming sustainable development into EU policies: 2009 review of the EU strategy for sustainable development (COM (2009) 400 final.);

Whereas:

an examination of the European Union documents was particularly useful in view of the major challenges that await the international community in the fight against climate change, with particular reference to the conference due to be held in Copenhagen;

the European Union has been able to show that it capable of promoting the process of transforming the Member States' economies in order to reduce CO2 emissions by adopting the "energy-climate" package at the European Council meeting held in December 2008;

the "energy-climate" package is accompanied by a series of legislative proposals setting out a series of measures to translate the commitments into specific objectives;

to achieve the objectives, considerable efforts will need to be deployed by the Member States and their economic systems, even if the European Union, urged by certain States, above all Italy, has been careful to minimise the risk of relocation of production facilities as a result of the increased costs resulting from achieving lower emissions;

the Member States must be able to count on the support of the European Union to meet their commitments;

the EU's responsible behaviour needs to be accompanied by a similar effort at the international level, so as to avoid adversely affecting the competitiveness of European and Italian companies ;

the transformation of production systems is also justified by the need to reduce the dependence of European economies on imported energy products given that the countries which supply the fuel have often proved unreliable;

the fight against climate change provides an opportunity to trigger a phase of new investment and modernisation of production processes to which the policies pursued at European and national level can make a decisive contribution;

Whereas this opinion, together with the final document adopted by the competent Committee, should be forwarded to the European Commission, in the context of the political dialogue, and to the European Parliament;

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Subject to the following observations:

(a) steps should be taken to ensure that there is support available from the European Union for the transformation of European economies with a view to bringing about a significant reduction in emissions of CO2;

(b) to this end, steps should be taken to ensure that adequate resources are allocated and made available under the EU financial framework for the coming years, taking account of the subsidiarity principle, so as to avoids to a situation where the entire burden is placed on the finances of the Member States or companies involved;

(c) appropriate steps should be taken to help ensure that the commitments made by the EU are reflected in similar action on the part of the biggest emitters of CO2, starting with the United States and China;

(d) steps should be taken to ensure that when preparing legislative measures at European level adequate account is take of the specific features of each Member State and its production systems, so as not to create distortions in the distribution of costs or the benefits that may result from the implementation of large investments in innovation;

(e) steps should be taken to ensure that the incentive measures target sectors that can generate greater added value in order to maximise the results obtained in relation to the resources committed;

(f) a systematic national plan for adaptation to climate change should be drawn up, as has been done by other EU partners, so as to ensure that the measures and assistance instruments are consistent with the initiatives taken by ' European Union.