



European Council
The President

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Remarks by President Herman Van Rompuy following the first session of the European Council

I am happy to announce tonight that the European Council has agreed on a Climate and Energy deal for Europe for the period 2020 to 2030. It was not easy, not at all, but we managed to reach a fair decision. It sets Europe on an ambitious yet cost-effective climate and energy path. Climate change is one of the biggest challenges of mankind. Ultimately, this is about survival. It is the example of a long-term policy.

Why do we do this now? In climate terms, 2021, the start of the new period, is perhaps not tomorrow, but it is the day after tomorrow. Economic actors need the predictability of a long-term framework – to plan investments, to spur innovation, to bolster research. Back in March, we set ourselves today as a deadline, and we've kept our promise. We offer certainty.

Today's decision will allow the European Union to bring a positive message to the international climate negotiations – a message of commitment. Well in time for the UN conference in Paris next December, which should shape the post-2020 world order, at least in terms of climate policy!

It is also a timely decision in the context of Europe's wider energy re-think. With the crisis in Ukraine, and turmoil in the Middle East, it has become very clear how urgent, how vital it is to reduce Europe's energy dependency.

We need to build a genuine "Energy Union". Energy is an issue I've put very high on the European Council's agenda, several times last year and this year. The preparations for today's discussion have been ongoing for a long time, after the Commission's proposals; many of the issues are technically highly complex..., but the deal we agreed today is ambitious and balanced.

A few words on the three principles that have steered our work. First, fairness: every country contributes, according to their prosperity and capacity. Second, solidarity: with extra support for lower-income countries, both through adequate targets and through additional funds to help them catch up in their clean-energy transition. Third, thriftiness: the money should be spent in the most cost-effective way, from a Europe-wide perspective.

This will help to protect the international competitiveness of our industries, to protect European jobs. Reducing emissions can be less costly in some places than in others, and we should be able to use this. Hence the cap-and-trade approach in the EU-wide Emissions Trading System (ETS), already in place, which allows power plants and industrial companies to choose between investing in cleaner technology themselves or buying emission rights. We now introduce this market approach also between countries for sectors like transport, agriculture and buildings (the so-called "non-ETS").

Let me illustrate what I mean. In order to reach its own target, a country for instance Denmark – which already has double-glazing everywhere – can decide, instead of going for triple-glazing, rather to help finance a double-glazing project elsewhere in Europe. That way, it can get more emissions-saving value for its money. So: the new agreed headline targets are fourfold and they all work in the same direction: steering us towards energy that is greener, more secure and affordable.

First, the climate target: a reduction of at least 40% of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. This figure, which refers to the classic 1990 baseline, is binding. About half of the effort takes place within the EU-wide ETS; the other half takes place in the non-ETS sectors, with national, yet tradable targets, as I just explained. On greenhouse gas emissions, Europe is on track to deliver its 2020 targets, but we must keep the pace and this is a collective effort.

Second target: clean energy. We commit to at least 27% of renewables in 2030. Here we are talking about a share of total energy consumed and the target is binding at EU-level. This is an area where technology is changing fast, and where it is still early to project how behaviours will change, so some of the details will be fleshed out at a later stage. This is an ambitious target: currently, EU-wide, the share of renewables stands at about 14%, so 27% by 2030 means that by then Europe will double the share of clean energy.

Third target: energy savings. We commit to an increase of at least 27% in energy efficiency. This figure is indicative and compares to 2030 projections based on current consumption and technology. It will be reviewed by 2020, having in mind an EU level of 30%.

Energy savings are about changing behaviour and about innovation: to go back to our Danish household, both "switch-off the lights" and "improve the light-bulbs". Energy efficiency can have costs, but it also has real benefits – in terms of innovation, of research, of jobs, think for instance of the building sector. Saving energy also is the surest way of reducing our energy dependency.

This brings me to the fourth target: energy linkage. The objective is to have electricity interconnection worth 15% by 2030. This means that for each 100 megawatt it produces, a Member State should have the infrastructure to be able to import or export 15 megawatt to neighbouring countries. Interconnections are both an insurance (in case domestic energy production is down) and also an essential part of our energy market, as they help match supply and demand across borders.

In the same way, we agreed to push forward essential projects in the gas sector – a matter of common interest, where energy security is of course even more important.

Tonight we also had an intense discussion about Europe's response against Ebola. I'll come back to this issue tomorrow. We have nominated this evening the incoming Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid, Christos Stylianides, as Ebola coordinator for the European Union.

There was a clear call for further support, countries are finalising their commitments, and tomorrow we will adopt the conclusions on this point and I will be able to give you the latest figure.
