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Dr. Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
20 Rue de la Roi / Wetstraat 200
Brussels, Belgium

cc'd Vice President Frans Timmermans

Hamburg, 18 March 2020

OPEN LETTER

Foundations and Philanthropists supporting the European Green Deal – they are expecting higher ambitions for climate change protection, in the international cooperation and in climate financing and an alignment of the announced economic stimulus measures as a result of the global Corona Crisis with the key objectives of the Green Deal

Dear Ms von der Leyen,

The year 2020 is of particular importance for the international climate protection efforts and a joint commitment to implementation in order to counteract global warming that otherwise will be impossible to abate. At the same time, we are faced with the current Corona Crisis requiring swift measures in support of the European economy. Both can and must be looked at with an eye on their interdependencies to avoid potential conflicts.



The latest findings of the IPCC conclude that the CO2 Budget available to fulfill the Paris climate targets is smaller than anticipated. Hence, we have to act significantly quicker and more effectively.

Under the growing impression of the already serious consequences of the climate crisis for humanity and nature globally (especially for the status of biodiversity) the centerpiece for the Paris climate agreement, the regular validation and if necessary ratcheting of the nationally defined contributions (NDCs), will come into force for the first time this year. This will be the main topic negotiated and determined at the UNFCCC COP 26 this November in Glasgow.

Thus, the opportunity of bridging the immense gap between the targets agreed in Paris to keep global warming under 1.5°C to 2°C and the contributions available so far must be closed. This must also be the paradigm for the stimuli package announced to support the economy in light of the global Corona-crisis. For the European Union, one of the most important global economies with the third highest CO2 emissions, this needs to be seen as a central responsibility.

We – Philanthropists, Founders and representatives of major foundations – explicitly welcome your announcement to increase the 2030 climate target for Europe to 55% as part of your central initiative, the European Green Deal.

Nevertheless, we believe the current ambition level is still not sufficient to keep rise of the global temperature under 1.5°C or significantly under 2°C. Since it will be impossible to achieve central targets of the Paris Climate Agreement without “Natural Climate Solutions”, we are also expecting that the conservation of biodiversity, in particular the protection and restoration of important ecosystems, will be given higher priority.

Of particular concern to us are the plans to present the draft of the new 2030 climate target not before the third quarter of this year. This delay is in contradiction to your aspiration of having a speedy implementation of the European Green Deal and may jeopardize the entire UN Process to increase the level of ambition before the COP 26 in Glasgow.

Dear Ms President, we therefore urge you, to give the proposal for the new European NDC higher political priority and submit the EU Climate plan already during the first half of 2020. This, together with a simultaneously adopted and aligned program in support of the economy as a response to the Corona Crisis has the potential to lead to the necessary acceleration of Europe’s transition to becoming climate neutral instead of going a step backwards.



This way it can be ensured that the EU remains able to effectively act at the geopolitical level, allowing it to enter into negotiations with the other big emitters of CO₂. Only if Europe lives up to its historical responsibility by sending timely and clear signals to the international community, the maximum benefits of increasing its ambitions to abate the climate crisis can be realized.

We welcome that the Commission places a high priority on transformative cooperation, in particular when it comes to the private financial sector, research, technology transfer within the EU and implementation with other significant parties – we see here the particular importance of China, India and South Africa. In this respect the EU China summit taking place in September this year in Leipzig, is of particular importance. Similar efforts are necessary when it comes to India. In this respect it is timely, that an EU-India summit under the presidency of Portugal is planned for the spring of 2021.

We are convinced, that the German EU-Presidency as of 1 July 2020 must and can play a stimulating role for more ambitious climate protection. We also will step up our efforts in this regard applying our comprehensive and informative engagement targeted at the public.

We as founders and representatives of important foundations stand up to our own responsibility and will do our best to bring the Green Deal to life. We see ourselves as part of the solutions that are necessary for the implementation of the global sustainability targets outlined by the 2030 agenda, including the SDGs and the Paris Climate agreement.

In this sense we are asking you to keep the momentum of the European Green Deal dynamic, that you described as the “Man on the Moon Moment” and ensure the first necessary milestones of the deal are reached, that include higher ambition levels when it comes to climate protection, international cooperation and climate financing.

In view of the Corona crisis, we currently see, how an entire society is readily prepared to support political decisions by accepting severe restrictions that are based on elementary scientific findings. This because the crisis is clearly articulated and understood. This is encouraging and a strong signal of solidarity.

With kind regards

Klaus Milke

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