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Informal Meeting of Environment/Climate Ministers 11-12 July Helsinki

Background document for Climate sessions

I Enhancing global climate ambition – en route to New York

Three years after the international community agreed the Paris Agreement, the Katowice rulebook was adopted at COP24 in December 2018, making the PA operational and enabling Parties to implement its provisions in a transparent, comprehensive manner.

Year 2019 is often called the 'Year of ambition and action'. We need to turn our attention to making sure our actions and our ambition is in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement, including the 1.5 degrees goal. This is not yet the case. Global emissions are reaching record levels, and show no sign of peaking. There is a major gap between the global ambition the Parties subscribed to in the Paris Agreement and the current level of efforts. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on global warming of 1.5°C clearly confirmed the significant gap in terms of efforts needed.

The sum of existing actions, as indicated in Parties' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement – even when fully implemented – will take us to between 2.7–3.4 °C above pre-industrial temperature levels by the end of this century. This is well beyond what the ecosystems and humanity can tolerate and would cause irreversible impacts, eventually leaving vast parts of our planet uninhabitable. It is a matter of extreme urgency to strengthen the global response to climate change.

The Paris Agreement already recognised the need to regularly assess and accelerate global ambition. It was first manifested by the facilitative dialogue among Parties in 2018 (the Talanoa Dialogue) which took stock of the collective efforts of Parties in order to inform the preparation of Nationally Determined Contributions. The Talanoa Call for Action calls upon governments to work closely with non-government stakeholders to enhance global ambition by 2020 and to develop long-term, low-emission development

strategies. From 2023 onwards, the Global Stocktake will every five years assess whether we are on the right path to achieve the Paris Agreement goals.

In 2019, the civil society has been vocal in demanding more action and more ambition. The youth climate movement, with school strikes taking place all over the world, is a sign of the growing awareness in our societies that climate change is no longer just a future challenge but a reality already today. It will affect the future of the young, their children and their grandchildren if we fail to act now.

To meet the urgent need to address climate change and achieve the goals of the Paris Summit, **the UN Secretary General is convening a Climate Action Summit on 23 September 2019 to raise ambition and increase climate action.** In addition to mobilizing national political ambition, the Summit is expected to demonstrate the momentous transformation already taking place in the real world, and showcase best practises and groundbreaking initiatives. The UN Climate Action Summit should also promote sectoral measures and solutions with high mitigation and adaptation potential, including in processes outside the UNFCCC, in particular the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

Climate finance is expected to feature prominently at the UN Climate Action Summit. The Climate Finance and Carbon Pricing track will focus, inter alia, on the benefits of making public and private finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development. It will also shed light on delivering on existing climate finance commitments.

The Summit brings together all key actors whose contribution is vital - governments, private sector, civil society, local authorities and other international organizations. As for governments, they need to send at the Summit a strong signal to stakeholders and citizens around the world that the international community is serious about addressing the emissions gap, and is committed to enhancing action and ambition, respecting the timetable set in the Paris Agreement.

2020 deadline for NDCs and long-term strategies

The Paris Agreement and the COP21 put forward a clear timetable for demonstrating further action and ambition. By 2020, in addition to working on domestic policies for the full implementation of their NDCs, Parties need to **prepare for the communication or update of the NDCs** taking into account the existing ambition gap and the latest scientific conclusions. This should happen 9-12 months before COP26, ie. in early spring 2020. Parties are also encouraged to prepare **long-term strategies coherent with the overall objectives of the Paris Agreement.**

How the EU is delivering – and how can we do more

The EU has in the last couple of years finalised a broad legislative framework to deliver on the EU NDC for 2030 – the at least -40% emission reduction target- in the form of the climate and energy package. The Commission has estimated that with full implementation, this legislative framework will lead to approximately 45% emission reductions by 2030.

Also other pieces of EU legislation support the achievement of our 2030 goal, i.a. those on reducing emissions from cars, vans and heavy-duty vehicles. The proposal to increase the target for mainstreaming climate action in the EU's next Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2028 and initiatives such as the Action Plan on Sustainable Finance also send a signal that climate change is high on the political agenda.

In 2019, the EU has been engaged in wide debate on the requested **long-term strategy**, based on the Commission communication 'Clean Planet for All – A European Strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate-neutral economy', adopted in November 2018. The strategy and the underlying in-depth analysis present a vision for achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 through a socially fair transition in a cost-effective manner, with clear social benefits, using today's technologies. While major investment are needed in all key sectors, the communication shows that the transition is feasible and economically beneficial for the EU.

The communication, and especially its' vision of climate-neutrality, have been debated widely in different EU Council formations, as well as by stakeholders across Europe. The European Council in June 2019 invited the Council and the Commission to advance work on the conditions, the incentives and the enabling framework to be put in place so as to ensure a transition to a climate-neutral EU in line with the Paris Agreement. The European Council will finalise its guidance by the end of the year, with a view to the adoption and submission of the EU's long-term strategy to the UNFCCC in early 2020. Large majority of Member States have already endorsed the objective of climate-neutrality by 2050.

This work should allow the EU to adopt and submit to the UNFCCC by early 2020 an ambitious strategy, striving for climate neutrality in line with the Paris Agreement and its goals, that confirms Europe's commitment to lead in global climate action.

The EU expects all of its partner countries to also come forward with a clear long-term plan in line with the Paris Agreement goals. For this, the EU needs to scale up its outreach to create an alliance of the willing to sustain the political momentum for ambitious climate action, for example in the context of the High Ambition Coalition, the Ministerial on Climate Action (MoCA) and through its climate diplomacy efforts.

As for the NDC, the EU has earlier signaled that it will communicate or update its NDC by 2020, as agreed in Paris, taking into account the collective further efforts needed and the actions undertaken by all Parties.

The EU is also the biggest donor in the area of climate finance. The EU continues to provide financial support to developing countries in the context of the global goal to mobilise 100 billion dollars a year by 2020 and through to 2025, from a variety of sources. In 2017 alone, the EU and its Member States contributed a total 20.4 billion euro in climate finance – which is well over 40% of the total provided by developed countries.

Green transition is about putting people at its core

The EU experience shows that the green transition can go hand-in-hand with improving well-being of our citizen and offers ample opportunities for job creation and sustainable growth. Ambitious, durable and robust climate policy making is foremost about creating the conditions for transformative action and designing policy framework that both incentivises and regulates, taking advantage of economic opportunities. It is also about ensuring the social acceptability of the necessary societal transformation, so that nobody is left behind.

Climate action needs to put people at its core. The EU is committed to empowering civil society, youth and the private sector to contribute to solving the climate challenge. It is essential to secure the broader acceptance of climate action, while realising the opportunities for all associated with this transition. Climate policy and its implementation requires engagement of civil society and government at all levels.

Questions:

1. What concrete deliverables do you expect from the UN Climate Action Summit?
2. How can the EU best contribute to the Summit's success?
3. How can the current momentum be translated into enhanced climate action at the global level?