



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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President of the European Commission

Statement by President Barroso following the first day of the European Council of 23-24 October 2014

Press conference

Brussels, 24 October 2014

Good evening,

I'm delighted that the European Commission's ambitious proposals for a cut of at least 40% in greenhouse gas emissions has been approved. When we tabled our strategy back in January, many said it was the wrong thing to do at the wrong moment. Tonight we proved those doubters wrong. We have approval and we have an unanimous backing of the European Council of this very ambitious target.

This 2030 package is very good news for our fight against climate change. No player in the world is as ambitious as the European Union when it comes to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, the proof that it is ambitious is that we are now going from a goal of 20% cut by 2020 compared to 1990 to 40% by 2030, so, doubling the effort. So, this is indeed a very ambitious, but also achievable target.

It is also good for Europe's competitiveness because it keeps us on the path towards a low carbon economy and green growth, with the necessary financial support and solidarity. The economic case for fighting climate change is clear. Failing to act is far more costly in the long run.

This agreement is also vital for our energy security. By cutting our emissions, increasing renewables to at least 27% and saving energy, we reduce our dependency on imported fossil fuels from unstable or unreliable suppliers. That is also why we will speed up strategic energy infrastructure and interconnections, so that we can have a real internal energy market. I am also happy that the proposal made by the Commission on having a 15% increase by 2030 on interconnections was confirmed. These physical infrastructures are critically important for the real functioning of the internal market.

The agreement today keeps Europe firmly in the driving seat in the international climate talks ahead of the Paris Summit next year and the very close meeting in Lima. We have set the example and others should follow. Europe accounts for only 11% of global emissions, so we need all others to step up to the plate. I was representing the European Union in the summit on climate change organised by the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in September in New York at the time of the General Assembly and I can tell you how much this leadership from the European Union was awaited, namely by the Secretary-General himself and all those progressive forces that want to see a real global commitment to save our planet. So, this is going to set the standards very high and I hope it will drive others in the right direction, because we need, namely the big economies, also to join the European Union in these ambitious commitments.

Today's agreement builds on the 2020 package that was adopted in my first mandate and is now being fully implemented. And I mentioned that at that time there were many

voices that were saying that it was impossible and that it was too much, that it was excessive. The reality is that the energy and climate package that we have adopted in the first mandate that was proposed in 2007 is now on track. We are going to attain I hope all the objectives. So, according to our estimates, we will deliver on the three targets that were presented. So I am happy with that and I'm extremely pleased that we have been able to show an even bigger level of ambition for 2030.

An integrated climate and energy policy has been a red or, even better, a green thread through my decade in office. So that is why I am also happy that we could conclude today and I want to praise also the leadership of the President of the European Council, because it was difficult to get everybody on board. We were able to get today what the President of the European Council said at the beginning of our meeting what could be the best gift we could receive.

So I think now the European Union may be happy that we have changed the nature of the debate and that we have changed the reality on the ground. This is of course now work to follow so that in Paris next year we can see a major breakthrough.

On Ebola, the sobering figures speak for themselves: 10, 000 people have been infected. Half of them have died. The epidemic is far from being contained and we need to step up our action.

Speaking of the Commission's part of the work, we have responded quickly. We mobilised immediately €180 million and activated our emergency response centre to coordinate the delivery of medical expertise and facilities. We facilitated a solution for the fast evacuation of severely sick humanitarian workers.

We had today a very good discussion and I hope that tomorrow we can announce concrete commitments and pledges from our Member States. As part of these ongoing efforts, the Commission has today announced €24.4 million of immediate support for research into protecting healthcare workers, treating patients and preventing further contagion, namely investing on research for a vaccine.

This is a multi-faceted threat that requires a coordinated response. I am also pleased that the European Council has decided when discussing a coordinator to entrust this task to a Commissioner, a Member of the next Commission.

There were other important issues we discussed, but I think on climate the President of the European Council already presented very comprehensive conclusions and I will not elaborate further. Only to make a point that probably not everybody has noted. Today the dinner started with a beer. President Van Rompuy said it was the best beer in the world, so from Belgium, of course. And afterwards we had wine which was from Alentejo in Portugal. So, I think it was really a great combination. I am not saying that it was because of that that we reached so stimulating and inspiring conclusions.