Ladies and gentlemen,

The decision taken by the Commission on the Energy Union a few hours ago brings an important message to every European household and business: Europe is serious about a fundamental energy transition.

- An energy transition that is just and fair,
- An energy transition that will deliver affordable, secure, competitive and sustainable energy to all.

It was extremely important for me to come to the European Parliament as soon as the decision has been taken, in order to deliver this message to you and through you to our citizens.

Energy is indispensable. It is the lifeblood of our citizens’ livelihoods, of our economy. Yet, we have all grown used to paying high energy bills as if it were a fact of life, to recurrent threats to our energy supply in winter. And all of us have gotten used to the threats of global climate change. Yet, far from enough has been done to really tackle these issues.

Today, we take a big step towards an energy market that is economically sustainable; socially inclusive; and environmental friendly. An energy market that is integrated, interconnected, resilient and secure.

It is a ‘triple win’ strategy, because it will benefit citizens, businesses, AND the environment.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me highlight four main characteristics of the Energy Union.

First, the Energy Union, like the European project itself, is based on trust and solidarity. Over the past decades, Member States have come to rely on each other in numerous fields. It is time we apply this same principle also in our energy markets. Member States should in all circumstances know that they can rely on their neighbours, especially when confronted or threatened with supply disruptions.

In concrete terms, we will do this by developing new preventive measures and emergency plans at regional and at European levels, building on the stress tests for the gas sector. We will also ‘stress test’ electricity security of supply in the future. And we will reach out, in these efforts, to Europe’s neighbours in the Energy Community and to many other partners, to increase our energy security. After all, the Energy Union is not an inward looking project.

Second, the Energy Union should deliver free flow of energy across Europe, as if it were a fifth freedom. The Strategy we have adopted is the most ambitious European energy project since the European Coal and Steel Community. It has the potential to boost Europe’s integration project the way the Coal and Steel did back in the 1950’s, and it should remind citizens – but also our companies - of the great potential of the common European market.

A century ago, when electricity grids were laid in Europe, they were interconnecting regions across nations. We now have to do the same at the European level: we will integrate the 28 European energy markets into one.

In concrete terms, this will require a stricter enforcement of existing EU law; this must apply also when agreements with foreign energy providers are negotiated. We will therefore come forward with a proposal that will ensure that intergovernmental gas contracts fully comply with EU law, and we will increase transparency in commercial contracts.

We will come with new legislation to strengthen the European regulatory framework, a necessity if we want to continue to increase cross-border energy flows.

We will speed up critical infrastructure projects and monitor them much better, because without this hardware, we will have an internal energy market only on paper.

We will encourage and assist Member States to phase out uncoordinated, national policies that distort the functioning of the market. And we will produce, every two years, a report on how energy prices are...
composed, creating more transparency and a better functioning of the market. Energy prices are a real issue for our consumers, but equally for the competitiveness of our industry.

Thirdly, the Energy Union puts energy efficiency first. We have to fundamentally rethink energy efficiency and treat it as an energy source in its own right.

We will come with new legislation on the electricity market design; this will ensure that energy efficiency can compete on equal terms with generation capacity.

We will promote better access to financing instruments for energy efficiency in the transport and buildings sectors, notably at the local level, and we will encourage Member States to give energy efficiency primary consideration in their own policies.

And fourthly, the Energy Union will make our energy system fit for the future, fit for a low-carbon and sustainable economy. An energy system that is driven by renewable energy sources and in which citizens, cooperatives or local communities can play a much more active role. Consumer empowerment is a key word in this regard.

I am convinced that – as a world leader once said - “the nation that leads the world in creating new energy sources will lead the 21st century global economy”.

I would like Europe to be among these leaders! Europe has all the right elements to be a global leader, a global hub for developing the next generation of technically advanced renewables.

We will better focus our research and innovation policy, like storage and electro-mobility, and we will ensure better coordination between Member States’ and EU innovation programmes and financing schemes. Not only because it sustains our climate policy, the most ambitious world-wide, but also because it offers great growth opportunities for our industry, for job creation here in Europe. New business sectors, new business models and new job profiles will emerge.

To achieve this vision in the future, we need to start acting now.

That is why today we adopted a concrete plan with fifteen action points that translate the Energy Union into concrete deliverables.

We adopted a roadmap that provides a clear timetable for the adoption and implementation of the many initiatives – new initiatives - we have to take to establish the Energy Union. By presenting this roadmap, we bring clarity and transparency, and send a clear signal so that entrepreneurs and investors can make informed decisions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today the Commission has set out its vision, and its actions to make it happen. Yet, the real work starts now.

This work directly involved 14 different commissioners – from energy and transport to research and digital agenda. They all have contributed their ideas and different perspectives over the last months. This has been a real team effort, and I am very proud of that. As Vice-President in charge of this Energy Union project, I will continue to work - under the guidance of President Juncker - with all of them and make sure that all parts of the Commission work together.

We have to make sure that our actions are coherent and consistent. I will therefore start developing, without delay, the robust governance framework that the Energy Union needs in order to deliver on its promises. I can already announce that, building on all the expertise we have in the house, the DGs and the Joint Research Center, I intend to present before the end of the year, the first edition of the annual State of the Energy Union. There is no time to waste; we need such an instrument, in order to constantly monitor where we make progress, and where we have to speed up our work.

And I am of course looking forward to come and to present it here, to you, Members of the European Parliament.

Ladies and gentlemen, today we are setting Europe’s energy market on a new track. The successful implementation will depend on the commitment of all actors concerned: notably you the European Parliament as co-legislator with a European perspective, but also our regional and local authorities, private investors, EU citizens, and the Member States. If we manage to work together, the Energy Union will become reality.

Thank you very much!

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