



Speech by President von der Leyen at the High-Level meeting on Climate Action and Just Transition

New York, 23 September 2026

President Erdoğan,

Prime Minister Albanese,

It is good to be back in the United Nations to discuss climate and energy policy. I think this summer was a summer of truth. The recent summer months have been, as we heard from the scientists, the hottest on record, but maybe the coolest for the years to come. Europe is warming at double the global rate, even though we account for only 6% of global emissions.

Energy security is a crucial topic for Europe. And let me tell you our story. We felt the pain of energy dependence for the first time when in 2022 Russia cut us off the gas. We had an energy dependence for gas – 45% from Russia. From one day to the next, we were cut off. We fought back. Our supplies are now more diversified. And in 2027, we will have no more Russian gas at all in the European Union. What we did: we invested massively in our homegrown clean energies, that is renewables and nuclear. Then came the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, and we started to understand that we bitterly felt the cost of our general dependence on imported fossil fuels. Let me give you one figure that shows how bitter this dependency is. Since the start of this conflict in the Strait of Hormuz, imported fossil fuels cost us an additional EUR 90 billion, without a single molecule of energy in addition.

But Europe also has assets. This is electricity produced in Europe from homegrown renewables and nuclear. This clean electricity gives us independence, energy security, and it is affordable. Today, renewables are the world's fastest growing energy source.

In Europe, 70% of electricity already comes from clean energies, but more has to be done. And this is my second point I want to focus on. These clean energy sources need better integration in our energy system. At the moment, huge volumes of clean power remain unused. Let me give you an example. Last year, in the European Union, we installed more than 80 gigawatts of renewable capacity. That is good. But six times more capacity is still waiting to be connected. What a waste. So we need to boost storage and flexibility and accelerate grid connections. Our goal in the European Union is to double the share of electricity by 2040. With this, Europe could cut its fossil fuel import bill by EUR 260 billion a year and invest it in the clean transition.

Electrifying Europe means making Europe more independent. And allow me to conclude, what we are doing in the European Union can also be transferred to the global stage. Again, the figure from the beginning, Europe is responsible for 6% of greenhouse gas emissions, but warming twice as fast as the global rate. And therefore, of course, we get a lot of pushback also in the European Union. This is an argument that speaks for our engagement on the international scene to make sure that we have the investment in climate action that is necessary. Therefore, we are pushing forward the Emissions Trading System worldwide, so a carbon pricing. We are pushing forward to double energy efficiency and triple renewables by 2030. And yet, last year we started the campaign together with South Africa on scaling up renewables in Africa. For all of that, we need investment. Global Gateway is our investment programme of EUR 300 billion for the clean transition. EUR 150 billion are reserved for Africa, of which EUR 60 billion are already invested in climate and energy, and EUR 120 billion already programmed.

So the short message I want to deliver here: we are at a watershed moment, yes, but you can count on Europe.

Thank you very much.

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