

SPEECH

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*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

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Vielen Dank Herr Vorsitzender. Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues:

Why are we in politics? Well, I think we are in politics, because we believe it is possible to CHANGE things. Because, despite our different views and ideas, we share one inclination: to want something to be different tomorrow from what it is today. I think that over the next 5 years we have a lot to change in the EU – OR we risk lagging behind politically, economically and strategically in the world of the 21st Century.

My first conscious political act was back in 1972 when I put up a poster in my classroom: “Vote YES to the European Community”. Well, my class teacher took it down immediately, but still... Later – in 1986 – as a young parliamentarian I advocated for a yes when we had a referendum on the Single European Act – of course we should strengthen European cooperation... Later during the referendums on Maastricht as a Journalist I reported on the growing scepticism towards the EU – and therefore I was thrilled to witness the historic enlargement 10 years later proving the need for a strong European Union. In the last 5½ years as Minister of the Environment and then for Climate and Energy, I have seen first hand how much more we can do together. (Actually, I have often been able to use the EU as a lever for action domestically).

I have also had the privilege of working with MEP’s. On REACH, on cars, on ship scraping... And in October 2008 I came here to the Climate Committee to hear your views prior to the COP in Poznan. So... I know the value of working closely with you, also in the early stages of trying to change things. And provided you allow me the chance of working as the first Climate Action Commissioner of the European Union, I am sure that I will still need your help and ideas to keep the level of ambition high...

So how would I like to see Europe having changed 5 years from now?

Well I would like to see a Europe that is the most climate friendly region in the world AND which is living proof that by investing in climate friendly and energy efficient technologies you do not lose economically – you gain.

If 5 years back I had told you that in 2009 despite of a historic economic crisis, climate change would have come out on top of the international agenda, so much so that 120 Heads of States and Government would come to the Copenhagen Climate Conference, you wouldn’t have believed me. And had I told you that all the major emitters AND the US would sit around the same table acknowledging a shared responsibility AND the 2 degree target you would have thought I was dreaming.

For sure I was disappointed that COP15 did not deliver binding targets. Definitely, there is still a lot of work to do. But a lot HAS changed in the last few years – and the EU played a tremendously important role in paving the way for change - also in public opinion and awareness.

So, also the next 5 years can bring significant change. Not “just” because of the climate. Also because if we hesitate, if we drag our feet Europe will lose. Lose growth, jobs, welfare. Because, international climate deal or not... China is moving – and moving fast. Very fast. The US now understands the message and moves rapidly on energy efficiency and technology. Like Japan, Brazil, South Korea... In other words: Europe’s strongholds are challenged.

So, Europe must pull itself together...and we must work together. If we don't, we lose – if we do, we can win. To save resources is to save money in a future where – when my children are my age – there will be 9 billion people on earth all wanting a share in the good life making resources scarce and consequently expensive. So as we invest in a sustainable future, let us choose solutions that at the same time can benefit climate, energy security and job creation.

Let me take just one example: if Europe produces smarter and more energy efficient vehicles than others, it will not only benefit our climate and environment, it will also lessen the need for imported fuels, and it will make it more likely that we can secure jobs.

Some may say, we can't afford it. Well, I say: Europe cannot afford NOT to. Therefore: We must mainstream climate into all relevant policy areas.

To achieve that, I will work closely with my Commission colleagues for Transport, Research, Agriculture, Energy, Industry... and, naturally, with the Environment Commissioner. Where Mr Dimas was one strong voice, Mr. Potocnik and myself would have two voices in the College. But the whole Commission must be measured as to whether it delivers on President Barroso's political guidelines for the next mandate. The successor to the Lisbon Strategy must have incentives that promote low-carbon and green technologies. Resources for research in these areas must be increased, as must policy support for demonstration and deployment of new green technologies.

It goes without saying that I will implement the agreed climate/energy package with all the secondary legislation required. But mainstreaming is much more than that.

When for example we reform agriculture, we must systematically think climate perspectives into our priorities.

Another area is transport: Transport-related emissions keep growing and offset all too often the emissions reductions achieved in the power and manufacturing sectors. Some headway has been made with CO₂ and cars legislation, the forthcoming integration of aviation into the European carbon market and the Commission proposal on CO₂ and light duty vehicles. But more needs to be done, and I will work with the Commissioner for Transport towards a comprehensive climate and transport package.

Also when it comes to adaptation we must mainstream. As part of the upcoming debate on the Financial Perspectives, I believe there needs to be a systematic "climate proofing" of all new infrastructure projects that are financed by the European Union. I hope that this will trigger wider action on how to develop comprehensive adaptation strategies in all Member States.

On the international level, I will work very hard to bring about an international carbon market across as many countries of the OECD by 2015, and my objective is to link the EU ETS with the US, if possible by 2015. My predecessor put the European carbon market on a solid footing. This now allows the EU ETS to become more international.

There are many lessons to be drawn from COP15 – and I am sure I'll get the

opportunity to come back to this theme... But there is one very important lesson for Europe I think we must learn:

Those last hours in Copenhagen, China, India, Japan, Russia, the US... each spoke with one voice, while Europe spoke with many – different – voices. Some times we spend so much time agreeing with one another that when finally the EU comes to the international negotiations we are almost unable to negotiate. Here we must improve - in order to give Europe a stronger voice.

The next 5 years definitely will bring changes. Our goal must be to mainstream resources and to mainstream climate in EU policy-making. It would be a privilege to work with you and colleagues in order to ensure that the Europe of tomorrow is more sustainable than the EU of today.