

# CLIMATE CHANCE ADDRESSES EUROPEAN LEADERS:

CLIMATE AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MUST  
BE AT THE HEART OF POST-CRISIS EUROPEAN  
POLICIES

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For the first time in the history of our societies, in the face of the Covid-19 health crisis, most governments on the planet opted to go into lockdown, considering that saving millions of lives was much more important than the economic cost of such an unprecedented move. This altruistic, massively supported choice clearly illustrates our collective progress in terms of humanity, the primary value that we give human life, and our capacity to jointly organize ourselves in record time to respond to a new threat unknown only a few weeks before. This pandemic has also brought to light numerous examples of local solidarity. Faced with this crisis, a whole-of-society approach has prevailed! Many lessons will be learned from these three months, both in terms of solidarity and reorganisation capacities and in the acceleration of many of the necessary transitions and their undeniable contribution. This crisis invites us to revisit our understanding of intergenerational solidarity; of the challenges of locating many agricultural activities, goods and services as close as possible to their location; of the need for energy shifts; and of the consideration of the digital transition that is underway.

The crisis has also clearly underlined our fragility, starting with the physical fragility of human beings, who remain acutely sensitive to variations in the environment, with the circulation of viruses and bacteria all too often neglected; the limited scope of our knowledge; the limitations and sometimes inconsistency of our health protection systems; the inadequacy of some emergency supply chains; the fragility of huge swathes of our economies, like transport, culture, tourism and sport, all of which are highly vulnerable to the restricted circulation of goods and people; and the overall fragility of the global economy, which does little to protect the most vulnerable people, with almost immediate impacts on employment. And we are only just beginning to weigh up the consequences of the crisis on the least developed economies, the most precarious workers and young people at a time when the ILO revealed that already  $\frac{1}{6}$  of young people have lost their jobs during this crisis, and what about those who will want to enter the world of work? Thus, the reconstruction of employment must be at the centre of the recovery plans being discussed today, they must also place particular emphasis on training and access for young people to the trades of this new economy.

A reaffirmation of our humanity and a demonstration of our fragility are the two lessons that should be the foundations for building responses to this crisis. This unprecedented situation calls for constructing a stronger world more capable of responding to the major known challenges now facing us, which threaten the future of our societies much more than Covid-19. We know what these challenges are because they have been on the international agenda for years, and in particular since 2015, when all nations in the world adopted the Sustainable Development Goals in New York at the general assembly of the United Nations, followed by the climate agreement at COP 21 in Paris that December. It should therefore be obvious that

we need to fit our immediate and mid-term public policies in with this international agenda, in a coherent response to this collective effort to combat a pandemic that has threatened us all. It would be totally absurd for us to neglect forthcoming crises, predicted for the short term, in our responses to a health crisis that has precisely underlined the difficulties in our societies.

Since 2015, the Climate Chance association has been voicing messages shared by networks of different stakeholders (local authorities, companies, NGOs, etc.) at international forums, addressed to the world's policy makers (like for example the declaration of the 2017 Climate Chance summit in Agadir, to date the most widely signed declaration by non-state actors and associations of local governments in the history of climate negotiations). The choices made by Europe, the leading global economy, will be crucial for building tomorrow's world and for its own future. The European debate over the next few weeks will therefore be decisive, based on the recovery plan put forward by the European Commission, both as a response to the grave economic difficulties generated by the current health crisis and to environmental challenges through the "Green New Deal". We therefore think that it is important to contribute in the current debate on defining this new economy, by defending solutions capable of meeting the climate challenge, but also by underlining the importance of consistent policies at European, national, regional and local levels, and the absolute necessity to take into account the issues of social cohesion, development and solidarity.

**For us, this does not only mean underlining a few key principles.** The Climate Chance association has spent the last three years developing a Global Observatory of Non-state Climate Action to analyze the success stories and hurdles of attempts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, understand synergies between national and international situations, and the dynamics of stakeholders that see through these projects locally. As a result, by identifying and analyzing very concrete examples of "good practices", we propose a set of priorities to put at the heart of forthcoming policies.

**These proposals are in priority addressed at political leaders (governments and parliaments) of the European Union and its Member States, whose choices will be decisive to engage the world on a path towards reaching the key human development goals on the international agenda, compatible with the major environmental challenges of preserving the climate and biodiversity.**

## SIX KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE PUBLIC POLICIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND MEMBER STATES

### 1 Put a real price on carbon and cover all global emissions

As long as fossil fuels remain the cheapest, easiest energy, we will not be able to shift to a low-carbon economy, and their recent drop in price even threatens the global momentum of developing renewable energy sources. Most successful rapid exits from fossil energy production have been achieved thanks to a high carbon price. For example, the United Kingdom, which in the space of a few years has succeeded in almost totally eliminating coal-fueled electricity production. Therefore, **we advocate increasing the price of carbon on the European Market (ETS), with a sufficiently high minimum price to drive this shift.**

This European policy should integrate adjustment mechanisms at borders to avoid unfair competition, and the EU will need to adopt a firm approach. No sector should avoid this taxation; in particular, the aviation and maritime industries, whose contribution to climate change can no longer be played down. **The revenues generated should go to support the countries and economic sectors most dependent on fossil fuels, and development policies. They could contribute to the Just Transition Fund developed by the European Commission.**

This approach indispensably involves accompanying the private sector, a key investor in the transformation, with measures to facilitate minimal financial risk on long-term investments in very low-carbon solutions (amortization period, etc.).

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### 2 Reinforce development policies and financial flows towards developing countries

Without providing significant support for vulnerable countries, in particular African ones, in a low-carbon transition that ensures them genuine development, access to clean energy and modern, carbon-free services, we will not be able to meet the challenges of the 21st century concerning both human development and major environmental issues. In recent years, we have observed very encouraging results, for example in the development of renewable energy, and carbon sink conservation policies that generate significant revenues for states and local communities. The mechanisms for erasing emissions through cross-border carbon credits must be refined to be drivers for local development in these vulnerable countries whose role in global climate stability is key.

Thus, beyond human emergencies, it would be prejudicial to center development aid only on afflicted territories or on the current health crisis; we already know that the least developed economies, especially African ones, are the first financial victims of the current crisis, and within them, discriminated populations,

such as women and indigenous peoples. The goal today should be to support active policies for development and to boost resilience, in areas as diverse as food independence, urban development, access to sustainable energy, carbon sink conservation, and biodiversity.

**Whatever the current financial difficulties of the most developed countries following the health crisis, the reevaluation of financial flows towards developing countries should be an international priority: reevaluation of direct development aid, new funding, or debt cancellation. These flows can also be fed by income from higher carbon taxes. Europe must assume the international leadership of this proactive financial mobilization. It is also worth pointing out that the issue is not only the amount – building capacities to implement programs is key, and involves support for actors and easier access to funding; decentralized cooperation could play a strong role here.**

3

### **Provide strong support to local authorities**

Our analysis of climate action developed at local level reveals some impressive success stories, including cities capable of setting short-term carbon neutrality targets. These results rely on resolute action by elected parties, the mobilization of all local stakeholders, support for gender-sensitive citizen participation, the alignment of all local public policies, the use of specific local tools, such as for energy production, and cooperation between local, regional, national and European levels. A significant reduction in European greenhouse gas emissions therefore involves placing renewed trust in local authorities, by equipping them with new financial tools for investment (interest-free loans, loan guarantees, tools for mobilizing local savings, etc.), and guaranteeing them long-term income to cover operating costs (public transport, support for thermal rehabilitation, etc.). EU legislation on public calls for tender should include more criteria concerning relocation of economic activities and environmental impacts.

**The European “economic recovery” plans being drawn up should therefore put priority focus on local and regional action, accompanied by mechanisms to strengthen public capacity for action (public commissions, energy production tools, access to loans, etc.), while ensuring that all stakeholders participate. A considerable share of carbon tax revenues should be dedicated to local areas to cover the increased public operating costs required to implement this kind of transition.**

**In this area, we insist on the need for a proactive policy to rehabilitate old housing and offices, which is highly energy consuming and contributes to precarity. The example of Canada illustrates how only close coordination between the different public levels can produce significant results in this area. We therefore call for a comprehensive plan including massive, long-term EU financing**

and easier access to funding for local actors, stricter national and regional regulations, support for these job-creating economic sectors, and strong support for local information and coordination policies, which are vital a step in making projects more widespread. This area is also promising for innovation both in the evolution of building surfaces and in its intelligent management to improve its use and reduce negative externalities.

### 4 Invest in a new transport policy

The failure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector on a European scale illustrates the importance of a deep-seated review of our strategy in this area. The surge in private SUVs has for example canceled out the progress made on automobile consumption, and we can only deplore the slow development of electric vehicles. Concerning goods transportation, the steady reduction in the proportion of rail over the last twenty years has still not been turned around, despite some signs of a shift in countries that have maintained strong railway availability.

The only significant changes in the transport domain are a steady upward trend in soft transport (cycling, walking, etc.) for urban journeys and the success of collaborative modes like car sharing and car pooling, in a context where air pollution and maintaining human health are increasingly central to political choices. Lastly, the lack of preventative healthcare in public transport, due to its very nature, has blocked the lives of a large share of inhabitants and made resumption of activity difficult in cities. The consideration of new collective hygiene requirements should involve a reexamination of their conception and role in global mobility solutions.

**We thus propose several priorities that could feature in a transition policy, and the support of the European Union and its Members States for the automobile industry should be conditioned on this consideration:**

. **A profound modification of the development of the road vehicle fleet:** reduce the proportion of large SUVs in the European fleet and promote small cylinders and alternative types of engine, including higher taxation on purchases of the former (emissions and weight) and lower taxation on the latter, advertising restrictions, and strong financial support for the reorganization of industrial sectors. For biofuels, only second and third generation biofuel producers should be supported.

. **Significant investment in renewed product ranges, as part of a coherent European architecture,** key to ensuring freight and passenger transport that is compatible with CO2 emissions reduction targets; taxation on CO2 emitted by air transportation should make rail more competitive, coupled with accessible pricing.

. **Financial support for facilities to encourage soft transport journeys** in cities, and massive creation of very low emission zones (freight and citizens).

### 5 **Farming compatible with climate challenges and conserving biodiversity**

The current crisis has highlighted European consumers' strong desire for high-quality local produce – a demand that was already highly visible before lockdown, with a steady increase in organic produce and mobilizations against pesticides. **By using the financial levers of the future common agricultural policy currently under negotiation, we should accelerate the evolution of the European agricultural model, with the aim of reinforcing food independence on the continent and reducing its environmental impact: development of local production and consumption circuits, rapid reduction in imports responsible for deforestation elsewhere in the world (e.g. soya and palm oil), increased area dedicated to organic farming and lower use of pesticides with precise objectives (-50% by 2025), and protection of farmland against urban sprawl. This latter point will also require a stronger European strategy on spatial planning,** because we need to find responses to combat the growing imbalance between hyper-urbanized regions and rural regions underequipped with services.

### 6 **A digital shift to serve the transition**

In recent years, digital tools have proved their capacity to participate in better management of mobility and energy consumption. The last two months have seen the massive use of digital tools, especially for teleworking. This accelerated shift will have a lasting effect, and current debates point to a collective ambition to strike a new balance in the way we work, questioning the time spent on home-work journeys. Such a move could have considerable consequences on mobility and spatial planning, while increasing energy consumption and the risk of isolation for workers. We will need to work on developing this area, in particular since this period of intensive use of digital tools has identified how far Europe lags behind.

**This “digital” strategy could involve several avenues:**

. **Make it easier for public and private stakeholders to access programs to fine tune their mobility and energy consumption, with a European support plan for developing these digital tools, made locally available.**

. **Develop easy-to-use programs to digitally manage consumption, such as building flows, with particular concern for low-income households in order to combat energy poverty.**

. **Implement a highly proactive planning strategy: high-speed equipment on all territories, including rural areas, to avoid a digital divide and to facilitate teleworking; support for disseminating coworking spaces to avoid isolation and take advantage of shared services.**



**. Develop a strategy to reduce energy consumption linked to digital tools, through information on good practices and energy saving.**

Defining a set of priorities is not an easy task, and the choice of one particular priority is always debatable. The exercise that we have carried out, based on the results of the Climate Chance Observatory, covers the main fields of CO2 emissions in Europe, and includes the main behavior changes recorded over these two months of lockdown. We are therefore taking our proposals to the public debate forums of the European Union and its Member States, with the conviction that the policy choices made in Europe in the coming weeks will be decisive for the world's future. The political ambitions voiced today, often almost unanimously, on the need to integrate environmental and human development issues into the big European plan, will only be made concrete if they are broken down into precise public policies. Participating in defining these priorities has been the point of this collective work. They should also be part of a much wider framework: the current crisis has revealed the importance of key workers for the wellbeing and survival of our societies: ranging from health and education to food sales and cleaning services, all of these sectors involve workers, mostly female, that have proved to be essential. EU public policies for recovery should therefore recognize the fundamental contribution made by these workers to resilience in the face of crisis. Policies should also make a priority of investment in education and vocational training, not restricted to a few strategic sectors of excellence, but concerning all economic sectors, including those that employ the most labor. The transition that they must drive needs to be just, otherwise it will not be shared or carried through by European citizens.

Climate Chance is the only international organisation that brings together, on an equal footing, all non-state actors recognised by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - UNFCCC, in order to strengthen their networking and develop common proposals.

The Climate Chance network unites hundreds of structures, mainly from Europe and Africa, within thematic coalitions. Climate Chance, which organises international summits and has an Observatory on climate action, is administered by a group of prominent personalities recognised for their investment in this area.

Members of the Climate Chance Association signed in their personal capacity and not in the name of their organisation.



### Signatory list:

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**Jean-Louis Bal**, *President of the Union of Renewable energy*

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- Hubert Julien-Laferrrière**, *President of the French Partnership for Cities and Territories, Member of Parliament for Rhône*
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- Gilles Luneau**, *Journalist, essayist and film director*
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