

Brussels, 18 February 2010

Letter of President Barroso to EU Heads of State and Government on climate action

President Barroso has today written to EU Heads of State and Government informing them of the next steps in the Commission's work on climate action.

President Barroso underlines that the international process needs to continue, building on what could be agreed in Copenhagen and finding new ways to instil trust back into the process. He states that an important element in the strategy is the implementation of the fast start financing for developing countries agreed in December.

In his letter, President Barroso states that the core goal must be to bring all partners closer to the EU's ambitions and commitment to a multilateral agreement. President Barroso has therefore asked Commissioner Hedegaard to undertake a consultation of key international partners to find new ways to reinvigorate the international process. President Barroso will feed this first assessment into the Spring European Council and then in full into the Ministerial level negotiations and the June European Council.

President Barroso will discuss with President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy on how best to prepare the discussions in the European Council and how to ensure a powerful and unified EU voice on these critical issues for the future.

The full text of the President Barroso's letter can be found below:

"Working together to maintain our ambitions on climate change will remain one of our most important challenges for this year. Since we did not have time to discuss this at our meeting last week I would like to share some thoughts on the work going on in the Commission as I believe we should prepare well the important decisions ahead of us.

In fact if the European Union does not take the initiative we may end up driven by the initiatives of others.

Most of us were in Copenhagen, and I think none of us were satisfied with the outcome. However, Copenhagen was a reality check. We had hoped that leading by example, and our commitment to step up our efforts to 30%, would be enough to bring others on board. This did not happen. But this is not the time for the EU to start doubting its commitments. This would be a mistake.

We need to show that we have not given up on our ambitions, even if many of our partners found it easier to limit themselves to the lowest common denominator. We should rather show our commitment to press ahead with delivery – implementing our climate and energy package showing how tackling climate change is a dynamic element in a strategy for growth by creating jobs and boosting energy security under the Europe 2020 approach that I presented and we discussed last week.

Besides the internal dimension of our work, the international front is as important as ever to tackling the threat of climate change. We need the international process to continue, building on what we could agree in the Copenhagen Accord and finding new ways to instil trust back into the process.

An important element in this strategy should be the implementation of the fast start financing we have committed to last December. We should not forget that those who were working more closely with us in Copenhagen were the developing countries, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable.

But our core goal must be to bring all partners closer to our own ambitions and to our commitment to a multilateral agreement. Copenhagen showed us just how tough it will be. Hence if we are to progress, we have to rethink our approach to these partners.

I have therefore asked Connie Hedegaard, the Commissioner for Climate Action, to undertake a consultation of key international partners to find ways to reinvigorate the international process. I would hope to have some first thoughts by the Spring European Council, and then to feed the results in full into the Ministerial level negotiations announced by Chancellor Merkel and the June European Council. I would of course hope that this process can also benefit from your own reflections on the direction of partners' thinking.

The work we are already doing to tackle climate change can act as a powerful lever for others to follow – but it must be seen as a genuinely collective approach. I will be discussing with Herman Van Rompuy the best way to address these elements in March as well as how we can ensure a powerful and unified EU voice on these critical issues for the future."