

Opening Remarks by Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans at virtual Ministerial meeting on Climate Action

07/07/2020

I cannot say good morning, good afternoon or goodnight, as it depends on the time zone you are in.

It is great to be able to welcome you to the 4th session of the Ministerial on Climate Action. I am very grateful to you that you are available and I want to say that I think that what we are discussing today is very important for the recovery we are all hoping for.

I send you my commiserations with all the tragedies going on around the world caused by this pandemic. I feel for everyone who is suffering, I feel for everyone who is struggling. We all know people who caught the virus and got very ill or even worse. Our hearts go out to everyone who is experiencing this and it is our duty as public officials to fight this pandemic.

It is also our duty to come up with plans to restore our economies and to increase the resilience of our societies. I honestly believe that although in many people's minds the climate crisis and biodiversity crisis might not be the item that is first on their agenda; it is still an item that needs to be addressed if you take your responsibility.

The climate crisis is still there, the biodiversity crisis is still there and we will have one shot at addressing them together with the recovery plans that will now be made. We can mobilise the funds for recovery, it is not going to be easy, but we as a global community will have to do that. If we then use these funds to prop up the economy that is changing anyway, to prop up the old economy instead of investing into the new economy, the sustainable economy, if we maintain systems that even before the pandemic were outdated and should have been reformed, if we restore them, we will use our children's money, our children's heritage, for the past and not the future.

That is why I believe that green recovery should also be the plan for the recovery and this is what I would like for us to discuss today. In your recovery plans, how do you incorporate the green agenda, how do you facilitate the change in your energy mix, how do you use finance in that direction, how do you bring together the private sector and the public sector in this? I believe if we share our visions today, it will help us find our chances tomorrow.

As far as Europe is concerned, I think there is a broad consensus in our Member States that our recovery should be based on the European Green Deal, on the need to digitalise our society and on the need to increase our resilience. In setting in motion the recovery plan along those lines, we still can reach climate neutrality by 2050, we can reach a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions up to -55% by 2030 and we can introduce a climate law hopefully later this year, that can give us a trajectory to climate neutrality by 2050.

This is what we are going to do in Europe. I am really very curious to hear from you what you will be doing in your neck of the woods, so that we reach a collective objective of making a great success of the next COP in Glasgow on climate and also the COP in May next year on biodiversity in China. These are our main objectives and I think we are all on the same page.

Well colleagues, let me also introduce today his Excellency Selwin Hart, Assistant Secretary-General for the Climate Action Team in the UN, who has kindly agreed to facilitate our discussions.

However, before we get to the discussions, I would now like to give the floor to Minister Wilkinson followed by Minister Huang for their opening Remarks.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing your views.