

To:

Charles Michel, President of the European Council

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

Heads of State and Government of EU Member States

30th of May, 2024

Civil Society, businesses, cities, and regions urge EU leaders to prioritise a socially fair and green climate transition in the Strategic Agenda

Dear EU leaders,

The contours of Europe's 2024-2029 Strategic Agenda are beginning to take shape. Given the increasingly complex environment that Europe faces, topics such as competitiveness, energy, security, and global engagement are emerging as key drivers.

As civil society stakeholders, businesses, and organisations representing cities and regions from across Europe, we would like to stress the importance of considering these factors within a broader, forward-thinking strategy that prioritises the lasting well-being of all Europeans. To this end, **we strongly recommend that the Strategic Agenda builds upon the success of elevating the EU's transition to a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe as a strategic north star.**

We outline below how this approach would bolster Europe's competitiveness, security, and place in the world, all while ensuring that averting the existential threat of climate change through a just transition is kept as the priority that scientists – and citizens – tell us it is.

To meet the challenges Europe now faces, we see the following elements as crucial for inclusion in the Strategic Agenda:

1. **Maintain the building of a 'climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe' as one of the main priorities.** The European Green Deal is a historic framework achieved with cross-party consensus off the back of sustained popular and private sector support for climate action. It is the blueprint for modernising Europe's economy, ramping up competitiveness, and building energy and socio-economic security - including by expediting the move away from fossil fuels and accelerating electrification. 2024-2029 is the time to accelerate on this track by agreeing an ambitious 2040 target, improving climate resilience, establishing a strong social dimension with boosted labour rights and social and civil dialogue, and tapping into the economic benefits of climate action and sustainable resource management.¹ Setting this direction will be most impactful with the support and vision of all 27 EU Member States.
2. **Put public funding, economic governance and an EU budget equipped for the future squarely on the agenda.** The global race to net zero and industrial transformation is heating up, with major economic actors making massive clean investments. The EU needs to position itself as a frontrunner in this race, including by enabling increased investments in key industries. At the same time, European citizens, workers, and the poorest regions and cities are feeling the crunch

of an unequally shared burden. There is a growing consensus that leaders must act at the EU level to succeed in this context. A strategic, integrated, and inclusive European approach can avoid fragmentation, smooth societal costs, and leverage the EU's unique competitive advantages. But none of this will be possible without funding – in sufficient amounts and harnessing the right private investments. The EU must build off and improve upon the EU Recovery Fund by establishing a long-term, adequately sized EU Fund aimed at achieving a socially just and competitive transformation across Europe towards net zero and a circular economy.

3. **Urgently prioritise social and democratic concerns.** 2024, like 2019, is an election year marked by concerns about social unrest. EU citizens are signalling their worries across the bloc, and it is incumbent upon public officials to listen. Without adequate action and support, households, workers, small businesses, public services and local authorities will increasingly feel the distributional effects of Europe's economic transformation. To avoid people losing hope in democratic institutions, we need a whole of society approach that includes all stakeholders - from local and regional governments to small businesses, from households, industry and academia, to national governments. A green and just industrial strategy can create jobs, strengthen the social dimension – including through a strengthened European Pillar of Social Rights – tie strong eco-social conditionalities to public funds, and steer the direction of travel with a careful eye on distributional impacts.

4. **An approach to international relations that seeks to build lasting security and solidarity through mutually beneficial clean transition partnerships.** In an increasingly multipolar world, the EU can strengthen its geopolitical position, preserve its influence, and advance the shared goal of global decarbonisation and climate resilience by putting clean transition partnerships and associated financial and technical support at the core of its foreign policy. Through such global engagement, the EU can play a leading role in phasing out fossil fuels, tripling renewable energy, and doubling the rollout of energy efficiency globally. Clean transition partnerships can reflect shared economic and social interests, be mutually beneficial beyond climate considerations, and contribute to the EU meeting its international commitments, all while putting the world on track to net zero. Hallmarks of well-designed partnerships would include strong targets for sustainable and just transitions in partner countries and meaningful commitments to respecting human and labour rights. In this way, the EU can lead the path to rebuilding international stability and boosting the trust of Global South partners at the highest political levels.

Yours sincerely,

ActionAid International
Association for International Affairs
Austrian Alliance for Climate Justice
Ball Corporation
Bond Beter Leefmilieu
C40 Cities - Climate leadership group
Carbon Gap
CARE France
Centre for Transport and Energy

CER Sustainable Business Network
Clean Air Action Group
Climate Action Network Europe - CAN-E
Climate Coalition Slovakia
Climate Group
Conama
Corporate Leaders Group Europe
Deutscher Naturschutzring e.V. – DNR
ECCO Think Tank
Eco-union
Ecological Manifesto - ManEco
Electra Energy
Environmental Justice Foundation
Eurocities
EuroHealthNet
European Alliance to Save Energy - EU-ASE
European Anti-Poverty Network France - EAPN France
European Environmental Bureau - EEB
European Heat Pump Association - EHPA
France Nature Environment
Germanwatch
Global Citizen
Haga Initiative
ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability Europe
Naturfreunde Internationale
Quercus - Associação Nacional de Conservação da Natureza
Réseau Action Climat
Social Platform
Solar Impulse Foundation
SolarPower Europe
SOLIDAR
Spanish Green Growth Group
Sustainability Embassy in Romania
Swiss Youth for Climate - SYFC
The B Team
Third Generation Environmentalism - E3G
Transport & Environment
WaterAid
We Mean Business Coalition
Women Engage for a Common Future - WECF
WWF European Policy Office
Youth Climate Strike (FFF Poland)
ZERO - Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável
Změna k lepšímu
350.org

¹ 100+ organisations call for EU legislation on Sustainable Resource Management (<https://caneurope.org/open-letter-sustainable-resource-management/>)

act:ionaid



AMO.CZ



Carbon Gap



care



CER

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS NETWORK



Levegő Munkacsoport



CLIMATE GROUP

CONAMA



DNR DEUTSCHER NATURSCHUTZRING

ECCO THE ITALIAN CLIMATE CHANGE THINK TANK



Protecting People and Planet



EuroHealthNet European partnership for health, equity & wellbeing



GLOBAL CITIZEN

Haga Initiative Business Climate Leaders



réseau action climat france



SOLARIMPULSE FOUNDATION



solidar



THE B TEAM



T&E



WE MEAN BUSINESS COALITION



zero.

ZMENA KLEPSIMU

