



Statement by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with President Michel ahead of the G20 Summit

Brussels, 20 November 2020

The upcoming G20 Summit this weekend could mark a new beginning for global cooperation. 2020 has been a very difficult year. But the G20 rose to the challenge and it provided leadership. In fact, the G20 has proven a strong pillar and a key partner for the European Union, helping us to keep international cooperation running.

Some of the main areas we have been working on in the G20 context are health, the economy, climate change and better environmental protection to prevent future disasters. And in all these four areas, Europe has recently made decisive contributions alongside the G20 and has driven the agenda forward on the global stage.

So let me refer to these topics. First of all, of course, global health: The coronavirus pandemic has caused an unprecedented shock to the entire world, in terms of lives lost, livelihood and of course economic costs. Naturally, our top priority is to stop the virus. Not only in Europe, but in the world. And for this we need to continue investing, to make sure that vaccines and therapeutics can be mass-produced and can be distributed globally at affordable prices. We have been instrumental in helping set up the ACT-Accelerator and its COVAX Facility, these are our main tools to achieve the wide distribution.

Now, as of 2 November, 94 high-income countries have confirmed their participation in COVAX, and 92 low- and middle-income countries. The objective is to purchase 2 billion doses by the end of 2021 for the low- and middle-income countries. Pledges of USD 1.8 billion have recently been made for procuring vaccines through COVAX for the low- and middle-income countries. More will be needed in 2021 for vaccine procurement. So the estimates are around USD 5 billion. And funding is also needed for testing and treatment in the ACT-Accelerator. The total needs were estimated at USD 38 billion of which USD 4 billion have been made available so far. The funding needs for the ACT-Accelerator seem to be very big, very large, but they are small in comparison with the costs of this pandemic. And this is why I have written to the G20 together with Erna Solberg, Cyril Ramaphosa and Dr Tedros to ask for support to mobilise the funds needed.

Let me stress another point in the context of the pandemic: The world needs to be better prepared to protect humanity against future pandemics. We have to learn our lessons. And of course, we will need to work together beyond the current coronavirus pandemic. The World Health Organization should play a leading role in this field. And yes, it needs to draw the lessons from the current pandemic and improve its overall effectiveness. In fact, all countries need to better work together for improving global health security. That is a new topic.

And to support these efforts the European Union will co-host next year a Global Health Summit with the Italian G20 Presidency. That is the point where it has to be discussed. And while the United States has resisted engaging on this topic so far, I am very hopeful now, with the new President-elect, that this will change. Indeed, the next administration has already committed to increase multilateral cooperation, including in the health field.

The second big topic of course of the G20 is the economy. And since the beginning of this crisis, Europe has lived up to the phrase: 'We will do whatever it takes to support our economy.' And yes, other G20 members have also adopted bold economic measures to minimise the economic and social damage from the pandemic. Tomorrow I will stress the importance of maintaining economic support measures until the recovery is firmly underway. I will also stress that our collective recovery must be sustainable and it must be inclusive. It must be in line with the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals as our compass.

Here, the European Union will lead by example, by focusing on the twin green and digital agenda – you know, our priorities – and we are aiming to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. We will also continue to promote an inclusive and equal recovery, based on robust social protection systems, on decent work for everyone and on women and youth empowerment. And we will emphasise the need

to continue supporting the most vulnerable, in particular Africa. In this context, I very much welcome the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative that provides debt relief to the poorest countries and its extension for another six months.

This brings me to the third big point, that is climate change. Last year at G20, the U.S. broke the consensus in view of their opposition to the Paris Agreement. This year, I am happy to see that the U.S. is supporting the conclusions. At the Summit, I will once again urge G20 partners to commit to the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement. We have made progress. The European Union is already walking the talk. As you know, we started the European Green Deal a year ago, when we committed to reach climate neutrality by 2050. And, as you know, we have proposed to reduce EU greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030. Following our lead, by now, half of the G20 members, such as Japan, China, South Korea or South Africa, are already committed to achieving climate- or at least carbon neutrality by 2050 or soon after. This is a big step forward.

Effectively addressing climate change will require a decoupling of economic growth from the exploitation of limited natural resources. COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021 will be an important moment to consolidate the world's ambitions in this respect. We also expect, of course, new momentum from the new U.S. administration on this issue, thanks to the President-elect's declaration that the U.S. would join the Paris Agreement once again.

Alongside fighting climate change, we need to focus global efforts on protecting our nature and addressing the alarming loss of biodiversity we see around the world. This is as important for our nature as it is for our health and our economies. We all know that the increasing pressure on our nature and wildlife is a major factor behind the rise of zoonotic diseases. And it is a fertile breeding ground for future pandemics.

This is why we need an ambitious global agreement at the next UN Biodiversity Conference in Kunming, in China, next year. This COP15 for nature must basically be like the COP21 was for climate and we need a Paris-style agreement to go with it. Our recent Biodiversity Strategy calls for a protection of at least 30% on both the EU's land and sea areas by 2030. But we need the same ambition at the global level if we are to protect humanity against this global threat.

As you can see, tomorrow's G20 Summit is the occasion to mark a new beginning in multilateral cooperation to address global challenges we all face. And with our partners, we stand ready to be a real driver of this new beginning.

Thank you so much.

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