Joint Baltic call for higher EU climate ambition

To:

Mr Jüri Ratas, Prime Minister of Estonia

Mr Gitanas Nausėda, President of Lithuania

Mr Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš, Prime Minister of Latvia

Dear Prime ministers,

We, the signatories to this joint call, are writing to you ahead of the upcoming meeting of the European Council at which you will discuss the increase of the EU's 2030 climate target.

We are in a state of climate emergency. Yet, our current commitments and actions are not enough to avert the most severe impacts of climate change. Unless we take rapid and decisive climate action, we are heading towards an increase of 3.2°C by the end of the century[1]. Wildfires, increased droughts and floods already heavily impact businesses, citizens and communities, particularly the most vulnerable ones. Insufficient, delayed or lack of climate action today is expected to cause welfare losses of 175 € billion per year in the EU[2] and will have tremendous consequences for generations to come. In the Baltics, unabated climate change will increase the occurrence of extreme weather events and cause risks of infrastructure damage, adverse health effects, shifts in vegetation growing seasons and hydrological regime[3].

This year is a decisive year for climate action as it marks the deadline under the Paris Agreement for all countries to revise their commitments for 2030 emission reductions. With the recent proposal from the European Commission to increase the target to at least 55% emission reductions, the EU is set to adopt a new target before the end of the year. The Commission proposal is a first step in the right direction, but more is needed. We welcome the European Parliament's recently adopted position to increase the target to 60%. According to the UNEP Emissions Gap Report however, all countries need to reduce annual emissions by 7.6% between 2020 and 2030 in order to limit global temperature increase to 1.5°C. For the EU this would mean achieving at least 65% greenhouse gas emission reductions by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.

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[1] UNEP (2019). Emissions Gap Report. https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2019

[2] Joint Research Centre (2020). Economic analysis of selected climate impacts. https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC120452/pesetaiv_task_14_economic_analysis_final_report.pdf

[3] Latvia's Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change until 2030. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/308330-par-latvijas-pielagosanas-klimata-parmainam-planu-laika-posmam-lidz-2030-gadam

This level of ambition is not only necessary to prevent the most dangerous impacts of climate change on current and future generations, but it is also feasible as shown by several studies[4]. These recent studies reveal that reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 65% by 2030 could help save the EU more than 10 € trillion in terms of avoided environmental and climate damage[5]. An increased, sufficiently ambitious and science-based climate target is essential in guiding the necessary investments under the upcoming multiannual EU budget and the EU recovery funds towards a just and sustainable transition. Besides generating numerous societal co-benefits in terms of public health improvements, a truly green recovery will help Europe avoid severe threats to biodiversity and the environment and could enable the European Union to become a global leader in climate-neutral technology and create safer and more sustainable jobs. This requires thorough strategic planning that also addresses wider challenges of the transition. Design of energy infrastructure to minimize material use and facilitate higher reuse and recycling rates for renewable energy and storage technologies and further incentives to prevent unsustainable mining should minimize negative impacts on our environment. Studies show that investing in energy transition technologies creates close to three times more jobs than fossil fuels do, for each million dollars of spending[6].

The Baltic region can be a driver of positive change and a benefactor of increased EU climate action. While emissions in the region have only marginally decreased after 1993, the Baltic Climate Declaration in October last year[7] underlined the need for joint action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions further. Ambitious climate policy and action can work as a catalyst for greater cooperation and exchange in the region. The recently announced second phase of the project to synchronise the Baltic States' electricity grid with the continental European network by 2025, which will contribute to a higher share of renewable electricity in the European single market, is a such a positive example of increased cooperation between Baltic states[8].

This is why we, the signatories to this joint statement, call on you to support an increase of the EU's climate target to at least 65% in your discussions at the European Council and to ensure that public investments are directed towards accelerating the just transition of our economies.

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[4] Overview of recent studies on the feasibility of an EU climate target of at least 65% emissions reductions. http://www.caneurope.org/docman/climate-energy-targets/3645-can-europe-65percent-is-feasible-sep20/file

[5] Paris Agreement Compatible (PAC) Energy Scenario. https://www.pac-scenarios.eu/scenario-development.html and German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) and Technische University Berlin. https://www.diw.de/de/diw_01.c.793359.de/publikationen/weekly_reports/2020_28_1/european_green_deal__using_ambitious_climate_targets_and_renewable_energy_to_climb_out_of_the_economic_crisis.html

[6] IRENA (2020). Post-COVID recovery: An agenda for resilience, development and equality. https://irena.org/publications/2020/Jun/Post-COVID-Recovery

[7] Joint Declaration on Climate Neutrality Target. https://bnn-news.com/baltic-environment-ministers-sign-joint-climate-declaration-206882#:~:text=Baltic%20States%20Climate%20Declaration%20underlines,as%20enhance%20cross%2Dborder%20cooperation

[8] Baltic energy systems: synchronisation by 2025. https://cordis.europa.eu/article/id/123813-baltic-energy-systems-synchronisation-by-2025
The key second phase projects of the Baltic States' synchronization programme: https://www.ast.lv/en/events/eu-granted-largest-possible-funding-key-second-phase-projects-baltic-states-synchronisation

We trust that you will take these points into your discussions at the upcoming meeting and count on you to secure the protection of our planet and the well-being of the citizens of the Baltic region.

Signatories:

Estonia

Baltic Environmental Forum Estonia, Balti Keskkonnafoorum

Bioscience Students´ Association, Bioteaduste Üliõpilaste Selts

EREA, Estonian Renewable Energy Association, Eesti Taastuvenergia Koda

Estonian Environmental Law Centre, Keskkonnaõiguse Keskus

Estonian Fund for Nature

Estonian Photovoltaic Association, Eesti Päikeseelektri Assotsiatsioon

Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation, Arengukoostöö Ümarlaud

Estonian Seminatural Community Conservation Association, Pärandkoosluste Kaitse Ühing

Federation of Estonian Student Unions, Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liit

Fridays For Future Estonia

Friends of the Earth Estonia

Keskkonnasõbraliku elustiili portaal Bioneer

NGO Cleantech ForEst, MTÜ Cleantech ForEst

NGO Mondo , MTÜ Mondo (NGO Mondo)

NGO Niilusoo, MTÜ Niilusoo

NGO Thanks to Nature, MTÜ Tänu Loodusele

Student Association of Environmental Protection of Estonian University of Life Sciences, Eesti Maaülikooli Keskkonnakaitse Üliõpilaste Selts

Tartu Students' Nature Conservation Circle, Tartu Üliõpilaste Looduskaitsering

The Estonian Medical Students' Association, Eesti Arstiteadusüliõpilaste Selts

Together with Nature Foundation, Koosloodus SA

Lithuania

Alliance of Lithuanian Consumer Organizations, Lietuvos vartotojų organizacijų aliansas

Association of Klaipeda Greens, Asociacija Klaipėdos žalieji

Centre for Sustainable Development, Darnaus vystymosi centras

Environmental NGO coalition, Aplinkosaugos koalicija

Free Society Institute, Laisvos Visuomenės Institutas

Fridays for Future Lithuania

Green Policy Institute, Žaliosios politikos institutas

Lithuanian Confederation of Renewable Resources, Lietuvos atsinaujinančių išteklių energetikos konfederacija

Lithuanian Fund for Nature, Lietuvos Gamtos Fondas

Lithuanian Ornitological Sociaty, Lietuvos ornitologų draugija

Lithuanian Responsible Business Association, Lietuvos Atsakingo Verslo Asociacija

Nature Heritage Fund, Gamtos Paveldo Fondas

NGO Circular economy, VšĮ Žiedinė ekonomika

RUPI, We do care

Student Scientific Society of Natural Sciences, Studentų gamtininkų mokslinė draugija

Latvia

City for People, Pilsēta cilvēkiem

Environmental Protection Club, Vides aizsardzības klubs

Fiqsy, ride sharing company

Foundation for Environmental Education, Vides izglītības fonds

Fridays for Future Latvia

Friends of the Earth Latvia, Latvijas Zemes draugi

Green Liberty, Zaļā brīvība

Latvian Architects Declare

Latvian Association for Environmental Management, Latvijas Vides pārvaldības asociācija

Latvian Association of District Heating Companies, Latvijas siltumuzņēmumu asociācija

Latvian Fund for Nature, Latvijas Dabas fonds

Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology, Latvijas Hidroekoloģijas Institūts

Latvian Renewable Energy Federation, Latvijas atjaunojamās enerģijas federācija

Latvian Wind Energy Association, Latvijas Vēja enerģijas asociācija

Parents for Future Latvia, Vecāki Nākotnei

Pasaules Dabas Fonds

Ride, e-mobility services

Riga Technical University / EIT Climate-KIC HUB Latvia

Uzlādēts.lv, E-mobility Company

Zero Emission Mobility Support Society, Bezizmešu mobilitātes atbalsta biedrība

Zero Waste Latvia

Pilsēta cilvēkiem

LIETUVOS ATSINAUJINANČIŲ IŠTEKLIŲ ENERGETIKOS KONFEDERACIJA

LIETUVOS ATSAKINGO VERSLO ASOCIACIJA