

Climate Change: After Paris, Time for Action

This time last year, the European Union and our partners all around the world were preparing for the COP21, the Paris Climate Conference that we all hoped would deliver the first ever binding, universal climate agreement. Well, we did it. All of us: the EU and Israel, the world's largest economies and its least developed countries, from the Arctic to the Pacific Islands. Last December, 195 countries agreed on a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C.

There are encouraging signs that countries around the world are keen to maintain this unprecedented political momentum. More than 180 countries, Israel included, have now signed the Paris Agreement and 22 have completed their domestic ratification procedures and become Parties to the Agreement. We encourage Israel to ratify as soon as possible.

The EU remains proud of the ambitious Paris Agreement and Israel should be too. However for the vision of a global low emissions future to materialise, we need to start putting our words into action.

It will take more than ratification alone to deliver the necessary greenhouse gas reductions, adaptation action and financing. To meet the commitments made in Paris, countries will need to take real steps, starting with the policy and legislative frameworks required to develop robust national climate plans and international approaches.

The EU and its Member States are taking concrete implementation very seriously. We are moving forward with our ambitious domestic climate policies, with new proposals that will help us meet our emissions reduction target of at least 40% by 2030 and further drive the transition to a low-carbon economy. We hear and understand concerns that taking action against climate change could negatively affect economic growth. But we have found that the opposite is true: in the EU, emissions have decreased by 23% since 1990, while our GDP has grown by 46% in the same period. During these years we have created new jobs, businesses, technologies and competitive advantages that prepare us better for the new climate compatible economy.

The EU has more than two decades of experience in developing and implementing ambitious climate policy and we stand ready to share our experience for the benefit of others. In fact, in Israel's case we already have extensive climate policy co-operation that goes far beyond our joint discussions on policy.

On the governmental level, the EU's Twinning programme bring experts from EU government ministries to assist their Israeli counterparts such as the Ministry of Environmental Protection in the development of effective legislation. In parallel, Israelis from the public and private sectors, academia and civil society participate in the EU's regional programmes in the Mediterranean. One example is the ClimaSouth project that promotes dialogue and regional cooperation. Rosh HaAyin, Ramle and Shfaram are participating in the Cleaner Energy Saving Cities in the Mediterranean programme which helps local authorities to develop more sustainable energy policies. Kfar Saba together with towns in the Southern Triangle area and Eilat are participating in the Sustainable Urban Demonstration Energy Projects programme. The SwitchMed Programme is helping Israel to develop a sustainable consumption and

production roadmap, among other things, by helping small and medium sized enterprises, like tourist sites, restaurants and minimarkets, to become more resource efficient.

Last but not least, in the framework of Israel's successful participation in the EU's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, Israeli scientists have brought their expertise, particularly in adaptation, to scores of climate change projects on issues ranging from coral reef management through more efficient use of water to the examination of the influence of climate change on conflict and human security.

There are more actions that we all need to take now. In November, countries will gather in Marrakech to start to add the technical detail to the breakthrough agreement in Paris. Building capacity to act, addressing loss and damage associated with climate change and setting out a roadmap to reach climate finance targets will be just some of the issues on the table. Before then, countries will also aim to reach multilateral agreements on limiting aviation emissions and phasing out highly climate warming gasses used in refrigeration and air conditioning.

Paris was a defining moment in the safeguarding of the planet for future generations. We must maintain that momentum in the months and years ahead, because the prize is worth it: lower emissions, greater energy security and energy efficiency, innovation-driven growth. There is lots of work to do and we look forward to working hand in hand with Israel.

By Lars Faaborg-Andersen, EU Ambassador to the State of Israel