

EU looks forward to Canada's constructive participation in Paris climate talks

The 28-country union is set to mark Climate Diplomacy Day on June 17.



EU/AFP Photo: Nikolay Doychinov

A stretch of Hemus Highway in Sofia, Bulgaria, pictured on May 29.

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Climate change is one of the major challenges of the 21st century, presenting risks to international prosperity and security. Securing international action in response is a key foreign policy challenge.

Climate change impacts are already being felt around the world, affecting human lives and economies. Without sustained mitigation action and effective adaptation, these impacts are likely to have considerable consequences for our way of life.

At the same time, the economic and business opportunities of a transition to a low-carbon future are also significant: the sooner we act, the greater the benefit. Timely investment in low-carbon, climate-resilient development can generate jobs and growth, and reduce the long-term costs of lowering emissions and adapting to climate change impacts.

We can accomplish much more together than we can individually. Nowhere is this clearer than in the area of climate change. It's a crucial year, as the international community prepares to adopt a new global climate deal in Paris this December. All countries are expected to come forward with their contributions well in advance of the Paris conference to enable us to design and agree to a robust and dynamic deal capable of keeping the global temperature rise below 2°C.

This agreement needs to respond to today's reality and prepare us to be fit for the future. Contributions need to be as ambitious as possible given parties' responsibilities and capabilities. Efforts and ambition by the G20 countries, that together account for 75 per cent of global emissions, will be decisive.

The European Union was the first major economy to submit its contribution to the new agreement. A handful of others, including Canada, the United States and Mexico, have followed. This is continued evidence that we are willing to act.

The European Union was the first among the G20 to put our emissions reduction contribution to the 2015 agreement forward, on March 6. The EU's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution reflects the decision taken by the EU's Council of Ministers in October to achieve at least 40 per cent domestic greenhouse gas emission reductions on 1990 levels by 2030. It will put us on a cost-effective trajectory to the 80 to 95 per cent reductions on 1990 levels by 2050 recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

But Europe accounts only for around nine per cent of global emissions and its share is falling: action across the globe is therefore essential.

It is clear that the Paris deal must also deliver on challenges other than reducing emissions. We need to be ready to support those most vulnerable to climate change and with least means to cope with its negative consequences. We also need to secure relevant provisions to increase co-operation in the area of adapting to climate change.

The EU is fully committed to doing its part and counts on the continued co-operation and collaboration of its international partners to reach a successful conclusion in Paris. Therefore, we are looking forward to Canada's constructive participation in the upcoming negotiations. This is an historic opportunity we cannot afford to miss.

I am very confident that together we can achieve these ambitious objectives. At their last joint summit in September 2014 in Ottawa, the leaders of Canada and the European Union reaffirmed their "determination to work together and with partners towards the adoption of an ambitious, effective, fair climate agreement applicable to all, with legal force, in December 2015 at the UNFCCC Conference of Parties in Paris (COP21)...with a view to doing our part to limit effectively the increase in global temperature below 2°C above preindustrial levels."

To remind us all of the importance of this issue, on June 17, the EU is celebrating a European Climate Diplomacy Day. It seeks to highlight the positive action that is being taken around the globe in collaboration with the EU and its member states, and to encourage informed debate and a joint response to the climate challenge.

Events in European capital cities and in partner countries will be accompanied by a social media campaign on Facebook and Twitter #ClimateDiploDay.

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