

**Opening Speech of H.E. Mrs Diana Acconcia
Ambassador of the European Union to Ghana**

**Statement on the occasion of the Launch of the EU Climate
Diplomacy Week, 25 September 2019**

Representatives from the Accra Municipal Assembly and Department of Education

Diplomatic Corps

Students and Teachers of MOH School

Ladies and Gentlemen

Intro

1. I am very happy that we are gathered here today, at Ministry of Health School, to kick-off the 2019 European Union Climate Diplomacy Week, dedicated to #RegreeningGhana.
2. The EU climate weeks take place all over the world around this time and this year the moment could not be more appropriate.
3. Over the last months we have seen the young people all over the world taking the streets to make their voices heard. They promote urgent climate action and bring confront us with our responsibility towards future generations.

4. These strikes for the future resonated from Stockholm to Brussels, but also here in Ghana, the latest one last Friday. The EU acknowledges their claim and call for action. We have the duty to leave behind a healthier planet, more stable, fairer societies and more prosperous and modern economies for future generations. Climate change is a direct and existential threat. It spares no country and requires a collective response.
5. Ladies and gentlemen, some of you may know that the EU has held elections earlier this year and that a new leadership has recently stepped it. The new President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen – by the way our first female leader – has declared a green New Deal the N. 1 priority of her tenure. And this applies not only within the EU but to all the EU's action around the world.
6. Of course we are not starting from zero. The EU has already been at the forefront of international efforts to fight climate change. Under the Paris Agreement, the EU has committed to a cut of **at least 40%** in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990.
7. And we have acted on our commitment. Europe now has in place the world's most ambitious and advanced climate and energy framework and has agreed all the legislation to meet 2030 targets, with higher targets for renewables and energy efficiency.
8. The European private sector has responded to the challenge and has mobilised record levels of clean energy investments. Once

again, and I apologize if some of you have already heard this from me in the last year, that protecting our planet is not only the right thing to do but very good business. European companies are at the cutting edge of renewable energy and other green technologies – and are ready to spread them all over the world to create sustainable and innovative jobs.

9. But we need and want to do even more. The European Commission has set a long-term vision for a climate neutral Europe by 2050. We have not managed to get there yet but I am sure that the new leadership will manage to find the necessary consensus to embed this goal in the EU legislation. I don't know if I would live long enough to see it – this will be for you, the young people, to achieve and preserve!

Multilateralism, Paris Agreement,

10. Ladies and gentlemen, dear students, the EU, as a developed countries bloc, produce a sizeable chunk of world's emissions and we have taken on us to reduce them. But we cannot save the world alone. In the face of climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and the overexploitation of resources, taking collective responsibility and international cooperation are key.

11. Multilateralism and international cooperation are part of the EU DNA. We need to work together, inside and outside Europe. Therefore we are delighted to have partners around the world committed to fighting the same battle. Ghana is one of these

partners. The cooperation between Ghana and the EU needs to tackle these issues on multiple fronts.

12. Among all the urgent issues we are facing, this climate week is targeting one that is particularly crucial for Ghana: I am talking about deforestation. Recent studies have shown that forest are our crucial ally to reduce CO2 emissions and fight against climate change, and as everyone knows they are threatened all over the world. In other words the survival of forests is a make or break issue for our planet!
13. This why last July the EU decided to step up its action to protect and restore the world's forests. The EU will not only reduce the EU-footprint but also work in partnership with producer countries and strengthen international cooperation to reduce pressures on forests.
14. This is also why “regreening Ghana” is the theme of this year’s Climate week, and we will give our small contribution to this effort by planting trees on different locations in Accra and Kumasi.
15. Ghana faces one of the highest deforestation rates in Africa. This is caused by a myriad of reasons, such as biomass consumption – wood burning for cooking, for example -, the mining sector, agricultural extension and illegal harvesting. Together we need to find solutions to tackle these issues.
16. Ghana is already making an effort. The Government committed to continue 10,000 ha reforestation per year. With the

help of the international community, this could be doubled. Action is already underway: Recently the Government concluded a landmark deal with the World Bank to cut carbon emissions and reduce deforestation. The EU applauds this deal and stands ready to collaborate more on this matter.

17. Just one word on what the EU is already doing to support Ghana's efforts to protect its forests. We are working together to implement an agreement that will guarantee that all timber exported to the EU will be legal and coming from sustainable exploitation of forests. A few months ago a EU project has helped the Forestry Commission to count the animals in Mole Park, the only surviving game reserve in West Africa and a source of invaluable biodiversity. And we are working in the North of Ghana, a region particularly hit by global warming and deforestation, to mitigate climate change effects and to move to sustainable farming practices. And I promise, more of it will come in the near future.

Call from young people has been heard

18. Ladies and gentlemen, dear students, young people all over the world fear for the future of their planet, our planet and demand change, and translated their concerns into peaceful collective action. They told us loud and clear that time to act is now. Ghana and the EU will pick-up this challenge together and find the necessary solutions to preserve our planet for the future generations.

19. The EU Climate Week this year has a special flavour because it comes after months of youth mobilisation for climate. I can feel the difference compared to the same week last year, I can feel something is moving. That's why also this year we have redoubled efforts and means to reach a larger number of people and to get out of Accra to, literally and figuratively, plant the seeds for future collaboration.

20. As always, youth will be the main target of our actions. Together with Accra Municipal Assembly, Kumasi Municipal Assembly and Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation we are organising:

- A beach cleaning at Jamestown on Saturday – there is still place to join so please do!;
- 60 trees, representing the EU and the 28 Member States and Ghana will be planted in the cities of Accra and Kumasi;
- 20 awareness workshops on regreening and tree planting will be conducted at selected schools in Accra, Asokwa and Kumasi, for 900 students;
- 4 workshop stations on "Designing for our Future", for 80 students;
- One workshop on youth and reforestation "Regreening our Future" will be held in Kumasi;
- Finally, a roundtable discussion on "Regreening the City" with a theatre on reforestation will close the week in Accra.

21. We would like to thank all the organisations involved in the implementation of the week: Plastic Punch, ComCashew, WeCare, Greenway International Foundation, Extreme Upcycle, Waste or Create and Orthner, Orthner & Associates.
22. We want to acknowledge the support of our sponsors: Alliance Française, Research and Grant Institute of Ghana, ComCashew and Victoria Michaels Foundation.
23. Last thanks to all the students and teachers involved in the activities in Accra, Asokwa and Kumasi. We count on YOUR contribution to save our planet!