
SWEDISH ACTIVIST URGES EU TO DOUBLE CLIMATE GOALS

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Swedish activist Greta Thunberg has urged the EU to double its climate targets, amid a European Commission pledge to spend billions on the problem in the future.

The EU aims to cut CO2 emissions by 40 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

But "this target is not sufficient to protect the future for children growing up today," the 16-year old Thunberg said at the European Economic and Social Committee, an EU advisory body, in Brussels on Thursday (21 February), according to the Reuters news agency.

"If the EU is to make its fair contribution to stay within the carbon budget for the 2C limit then it needs a minimum of 80 percent reduction by 2030, and that includes aviation and shipping," Thunberg, who travelled from Sweden to Belgium by train to underline her point, said.

"Unite behind the science ... Talk to the scientists, listen to them," she said.

The EU commission president, Jean-Claude Juncker, who attended the event, said a large chunk of the future EU budget would be devoted to fighting climate change.

"In the next financial period from 2021 to 2027, every fourth euro spent within the EU budget [worth some €1 trillion] will go towards action to mitigate climate change," he said.

He also criticised US leader Donald Trump for pulling America, one of the world's largest carbon polluters, out of a global climate pact called the Paris accord.

"Mr. Trump and his friends believe that climate change is something that has just been invented and its an ideological concept, but ... something dangerous is already underway," he said.

Juncker kissed Thunberg's hand in front of photographers at the meeting.

She was later welcomed as a celebrity by about 7,500 students and schoolchildren on a protest march in Brussels.

Similar marches the same day in the Belgian towns of Ghent, Genk, and Nivelles attracted a further 7,500 young people, Belgian media reported.

Thunberg held her first "strike" from school lessons in protest at climate politics in August last year, inspiring similar actions in Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, and Australia.

She also spoke at a UN meeting on the issues last December.

"If you still say that we are wasting valuable lesson time, then let me remind you that our political leaders have wasted decades through denial and inaction," she said in Brussels on Thursday.

Thunberg, who is a vegan, spoke one day before the UN warned in a report that land-conversion for meat farming and monoculture crops, as well as pesticide use, had contributed to a "debilitating" loss in biodiversity which threatened the world's food supply.

Some 63 percent of plants, 11 percent of birds, and 5 percent of fish and fungi were in decline in 91 countries, it said.

"This places the future of our food and the environment under severe threat ... The foundations of our food systems are being undermined," the UN said.

Kaynak/Source: