
BREXIT ECLIPSES CLIMATE TALKS IN LEAKED EU SUMMIT DRAFT

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20.03.2019

EurActiv (20 March 2019)

EU heads of states are expected to reiterate earlier commitments on climate action when they meet in Brussels later this week, despite growing calls from youths across Europe to step up the fight against global warming, according to a draft EU summit statement seen by EURACTIV.

EU heads of states and governments convene in Brussels for a two-day summit on Thursday and Friday (21-22 March), with Britains departure from the EU expected to dominate talks.

Green activists were hoping that EU leaders would consider raising the blocs climate objectives for 2030, after tens of thousands of children skipped school last Friday in protest against climate inaction.

The EU committed almost five years ago to cut its global warming emissions by 40% by 2030, an objective which now appears outdated since the United Nations sealed the Paris Agreement in 2015.

In a bid to nudge EU leaders into action, the European Parliament voted last week to raise the EUs objective to 55% by 2030. And the European Commission set off a debate about the blocs long-term climate strategy last year, making the case for Europe to aim for net-zero emissions by mid-century.

EU Parliament votes for 55% emissions cuts by 2030

Members of the European Parliament voted in favour of increasing the EUs 2030 emission cuts target to 55% and a net-zero mid-century target on Thursday (14 March), bringing an end to weeks of infighting.

However, the draft summit conclusions fail to send a signal that the EU is willing to increase its weak climate targets, activists said. And it also remains vague on the deadline for EU heads of states to reach agreement on the blocs 2050 strategy.

This position shows that EU leaders are out of touch with climate science and with their citizens, said Wendel Trio, director of Climate Action Network Europe. They fail to recognise that our current targets would only allow to keep temperature rise to 3°C, which would threaten life on Earth as we know it, Trio said.

Activistss hopes were lifted last month when EU foreign ministers called on world nations to raise

global ambition on climate change ahead of a UN summit in September. It is a matter of extreme urgency to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, said a communiqué adopted by the blocs 28 foreign ministers on 18 February.

As summit preparations got underway, a coalition of businesses, local authorities and environmental NGOs issued a joint statement calling on the EU to review its 2030 contribution to the Paris Agreement and endorse the objective of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

We believe it is high time for European leaders to rise up to the challenge of climate action, says the open letter by the Coalition for Higher Ambition, which includes business networks such as the Corporate Leaders Group, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), and the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, which connects 94 of the worlds greatest cities.

The coalition also expressed their support for the youth climate strikes. Unprecedented citizen mobilisations are taking place across EU member states calling for increased action against climate change, the statements says, adding that increasing the EUs commitments under the Paris Agreement is an urgent necessity.

The Brief - Lessons from a 16-year old girl

School children across Europe are marching today in their hundreds of thousands in an unprecedented mobilisation for the climate, part of a movement which has now turned global.

Below is the draft summit statement on climate change:

The European Council:

reiterates its commitment to the Paris Agreement and recognises the need to step up the global efforts to tackle climate change in light of the latest available science, especially the IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels;

emphasises the importance of the EU submitting an ambitious long-term strategy by 2020 striving for climate neutrality in line with the Paris Agreement, while taking into account Member States specificities and the competitiveness of European industry;

calls for the timely finalisation of the national long-term strategies;

recognises that the implementation of the Paris Agreement objective offers significant opportunities and potential for economic growth, new jobs and technological development and for strengthening European competitiveness, which must be reaped while ensuring a just and socially balanced transition for all;

calls on the Council to intensify its work on a long-term climate strategy ahead of a further discussion in the European Council later in the year.