

00:10

Fighting climate change has become the greatest responsibility of our times. And this is why in Europe, we have set our objective: to become the first carbon-neutral continent by 2050.

00:23

This means leading an entire continent towards transitioning to clean energy, reinventing our infrastructure, and much, much more. It may sound abstract, and it sounds huge. And yes, it's actually both. And it is also possible. Why?

00:46

In the European Union, we have a good record of turning ambitions into successes. We are a political and economic union with 27 countries and the total population of 450 million people. On the ashes of two world wars, we have secured lasting peace among us. From a divided continent, we have created a union without borders. And I strongly believe we can also achieve our next challenge: becoming the first carbon-neutral continent.

01:20

When I became president of the European Commission, I sent a clear signal. In the first two weeks, I tabled the European Green Deal. This European Green Deal is both our vision for a climate-neutral continent and a very dedicated road map to this goal. It is 50 actions for 2050, ranging from the first-ever European climate law, to circular economy, to a biodiversity strategy, planting trees, protecting precious nature and animals, recycling and waste management, just to name a few.

02:02

When the coronavirus pandemic hit, we resolved not to let our objective be derailed. The economic and social crisis created by the pandemic cannot be an excuse to postpone the transition towards a cleaner and healthier future. On the opposite, they create an additional accelerator to mobilize and to move ahead. Of course, not everyone agreed. Some in the industry told us it was impossible to remain competitive under these new constraints. Some unions were afraid jobs would be lost and workers forgotten. Some politicians said it was not realistic. We listened to them, but we also listened to other facts and arguments: the large international support to the Paris Agreement, science with robust data, and more data every year, the evidence of climate shifting all around us.

03:08

We all know it by now: glaciers melting, forest fires, more extreme weather events. And this is just the beginning. We saw the prospect of many new jobs created by the transition; European citizens, who, in their overwhelming majority, consider that climate change is a very serious problem; our youth demanding action for their future, and rightly so.

03:39

Building on this, in September 2020, we announced we would go one step further. We moved from a 40 percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 to an at least 55 percent reduction by 2030. We are taking this bold commitment for two reasons. First, we already know that we need to push further if we're serious about reaching our 2050 objective, which we are. And second, the more we progress, the more we rally.

04:17

Our 2030 and 2050 time lines are ambitious. They are also necessary. Solving climate change will help solve a host of other problems. Ignoring it will only precipitate them, as we see with the link between the loss of biodiversity and zoonotic viruses like the coronavirus. I know some are concerned with this transition, and I want to tell them these concerns are legitimate. But we have the knowledge, we have the technology, we have now the resources to accompany this change and make this transition just.

05:02

We are directing our recovery in this direction. If we get it right, a third of our recovery money, called Next Generation EU, and of our long-term budget will go to climate goals and climate projects. And this is more than 600 billion euros.

05:23

Now, addressing climate change will need more than politicians and more than a continent. States, companies, cities, citizens everywhere need to move in the same direction and to sustain their action over the long term. The European Union is open to cooperate with anyone who's ready to engage in this journey. Fixing climate change calls for everyone's action every day. You can count on me. I count on you.

05:56

Thank you.