

Joint Call for a Green Recovery by the EU Environment Ministers

13 July 2020

We are living in the shadow of the coronavirus pandemic, whose victims we deeply mourn. The measures taken to protect the public health have unprecedented social and economic consequences in all our countries. This historic situation is presenting the European Union with fundamental challenges, which we will confront together and in a spirit of solidarity.

We strongly believe that to overcome the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic in our economy and society in a sustainable way, it is crucial to set the right course from the very beginning. It is critical that we base our recovery on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Aichi biodiversity targets, environmental principles as well as our other international commitments. We therefore welcome the various calls for a green recovery coming from civil society as well as business, financial and political actors at international, European and national level.

As EU environment ministers we agree on the following:

For the economic recovery, reforms to promote growth and competitiveness, maintaining and creating good jobs and fostering skills development must go hand in hand with ambitious and cost-effective climate action and environmental protection. Time is of the essence, both the recovery and the climate and environmental challenges are urgent. We have witnessed how sensitive our economies are to external shocks. In the recovery process, we seek to strengthen resilience. We will do this together and in solidarity, since we depend on each other's prosperity in order to be strong as a European Union. We agree that we will actively and in a spirit of mutual understanding and compromise, address the challenge of maintaining the balance between stabilising and strengthening our weakened economy while enhancing future resilience and competitiveness and combating climate change and biodiversity loss. We are convinced that the cost of inaction would be too high.

We underline that the objectives of the European Green Deal provide a key guidance, also for the recovery of the European economy. It is therefore essential that the design and implementation of the MFF and the EU Recovery Plan contribute substantially to the EU's climate and environmental objectives. This will enable us to live up to our responsibility towards future generations and support the transformation towards climate neutrality, circular and resource-efficient economies and secure skilled future-proof jobs in an EU where nature is on a path to recovery.

Member States' national recovery plans should substantially contribute to these European goals. They should be based on the country-specific priority issues, identified within the European Semester, in line with their National Energy and Climate Plans, Just Transition Plans, Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes under EU funds, respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

As EU environment ministers we will contribute to the sustainable recovery by further developing the different initiatives under the European Green Deal that are currently under our remit, and we are looking forward to the Impact Assessment of the European Commission on the EU 2030 climate target. The Climate Law, the Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the Circular Economy Action Plan shall be designed to be key milestones for fighting climate change and biodiversity loss that also enable modernisation, job creation and skills improvement. We will approach these initiatives in a holistic way, while also very conscious of the need to strive for a just transition leaving no one behind.

In addition, the current crisis has highlighted the great importance of valid and timely data and information. As EU environment ministers we will discuss ways of linking the green and digital transition to make progress towards sustainability goals.

We will make it our top priority as EU environment ministers to reach an agreement on the Council's response to these key initiatives in 2020.