

QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE

Wopke Hoekstra

Commissioner-designate for Climate Action

1. General competence, European commitment and personal independence

What aspects of your personal qualifications and experience are particularly relevant for becoming Commissioner and promoting the European general interest, particularly in the area you would be responsible for? What motivates you? How will you contribute to putting forward the strategic agenda of the Commission? How will you implement gender mainstreaming and integrate a gender perspective into all policy areas of your portfolio?

What guarantees of independence are you able to give the European Parliament, and how would you make sure that any past, current or future activities you carry out could not cast doubt on the performance of your duties within the Commission?

I grew up in the 70s and 80s, a period that for many in Europe was dictated by fear, struggle and uncertainty, due to the Cold War and Europe's partition. As a child, I understood that these were threats, but I nevertheless had a happy childhood, growing up in the safety and comfort a growing European Community and under the security of NATO.

At home, at our kitchen table, we would discuss different societal questions, political debates, as well as our recent history. The Second World War was still fresh on many minds, as were the sufferings it brought to many families across the continent, including my own. Listening to my grandparents, I got a deep understanding how essential it is to have peace, safety, stability, and above all to cooperate with our neighbours in Europe.

During my studies and early career, I had the privilege to live in three of the other members of our Union: Germany, France, and Italy. Living and working abroad taught me a lot about who we are as Europeans. When we are amongst each other, we notice the differences. But as I have also experienced when traveling the world as Minister of Foreign Affairs: the second you set foot outside of our Union, those differences vanish, and what remains is a deep mutual understanding, and a recognition of what unites us.

I love Europe because of what it stands for: living together, in peace and justice, in a community built on the rule of law, solidarity, and respect for individual freedoms. During my childhood, my parents would regularly discuss our common European heritage, taking my siblings and I across Europe to experience different cultures and languages, and introduce us to the many museums, churches, and temples in the countries we visited. I deeply believe in the rich cultural diversity that is our continent. We truly are united in diversity.

I also know that we can take none of these values for granted. They need defending, day in day out. Russia's brutal aggression against Ukraine, its weaponization of energy and food, is a stark reminder of how fragile democracy and our way of life can be. It always reminds me of what Dutch poet Lucebert already wrote in the year before I was born: 'Alles van waarde is weerloos' – everything of value is defenceless.

This notion also applies very clearly to our climate, our planet, and our children. As adults and parents, we have the responsibility to ensure their lives will still be better than ours. We must ensure solidarity across generations and we have step up, even if it entails making

difficult choices here and now. Defending what is of value and taking long-term responsibility has been my main motivation for leaving behind a career in the private sector and focus on public service.

As Minister of Finance, I worked with different partners across Europe, building coalitions, finding shared interests, and working together in the Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action or on files like the Capital Markets Union and green taxonomy. I was grateful for learning from colleagues, for example Italy, where the Guardia di Finanza shared many valuable insights about how to effectively fight money laundering. This for me embodies the European spirit of cooperation: we help each other, learn from each other, and come out stronger together.

As Minister of Finance, I also worked on greening the Dutch finances. In 2019, I launched the first green bonds in the Netherlands. These bonds have since become a structural part of new bond issuances. And together with the Minister of Economic Affairs and Climate, I launched the 'Growth Fund' (Groeifonds) to increase investments in sustainable growth, in line with the Paris Agreement.

One of the main elements that attracted me to the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs, the office I held most recently, was the fact that this ministry carries overall responsibility for the European Union positions, and that I would therefore be working very closely with my EU colleagues on some of the biggest questions of today.

We cannot solve the major challenges of this time unless we act together at European level. Whether it is security, climate change, or technological disruption, we need to act together. In the Council, I worked proactively with colleagues to create majorities in support of Ukraine, including F16's, weapons deliveries, humanitarian aid, and to ensure justice for the Ukrainian people.

If you would confirm me as Commissioner for Climate Action, I will not just ensure continuity with my predecessor in this position, Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans. I will also bring my own ambition to the portfolio. I am deeply convinced that ambitious climate action is an absolute necessity, considering the enormity of the challenge it poses both in the EU and outside. To uphold the Paris Agreement and fight climate change, major efforts will be needed in the coming years.

Together with Parliament and under the leadership of President von der Leyen and Executive Vice-President Timmermans, the college that I would be joining has already set in motion a remarkable transformation of the European continent. Through Fit for 55, of course, but also through other flagship initiatives under the European Green Deal, such as the Nature Restoration Law and the circular economy proposals. These proposals also support our climate objectives, as they help reduce the pressure on land and finite resources, and support nature recovery.

As Commissioner, I would uphold the Commission's commitment to the full European Green Deal and will ensure that the policies in my remit will make it to the finish line. In parallel, I will help to build the foundations for the next stage, through our work on the 2040-target, so that we continue working on our transition to climate neutrality and that we leave behind a habitable planet for the next generation. This Parliament has consistently shown leadership on making the European Green Deal a reality, with many accomplishments so far. I would work very closely with you to continue along this path.

If I am confirmed as Commissioner for Climate Action, I am proud to join the first gender-balanced College in history headed by the first ever female Commission President. As a son

of a working mother and grandmother, and father to a daughter whose ambitions already outshine my own, you can count on me to continue my commitment to gender equality.

I have supported gender equality throughout my career. As Party Leader of the Dutch Christian Democrats, I presented the first-ever gender-balanced group of ministers, and as Minister of Foreign Affairs, I launched a feminist foreign policy, promoting gender mainstreaming and working with international partners on this vital topic.

In the Commission, I will continue that support for gender equality, including by ensuring that my own team is gender-balanced, and by refusing to participate in male-only panels. Here I should also note that diversity of course goes much further than gender equality only. It is about gender, sexuality, background, age, and thinking. Diverse teams are teams that perform best, and I will therefore promote diversity where I can. And it is obvious that climate change affects different groups in society differently, hence it is important to assess our policies for their impact on equality.

As Commissioner I would act fully in line with the letter and spirit of the Treaties and the Code of Conduct for Commissioners. I assure you that I would not take instructions from any Government or other entity, and that I would always act in the European interest. I would engage in conversation with everyone who will cross my path, but I would always work in a fact-based manner, following the science and only letting myself be convinced by facts.

In case any situation arises that might lead to a conflict of interests, or where my impartiality might be questioned, I would immediately inform the Commission President. My declaration of interests is public and complete, and I commit to making sure that it is updated should my personal circumstances change.

2. Management of the portfolio and cooperation with the European Parliament

How would you assess your role as a Member of the College of Commissioners? In what respect would you consider yourself responsible and accountable to the Parliament for your actions and for those of your departments?

What specific commitments are you prepared to make in terms of enhanced transparency, increased cooperation and effective follow-up to Parliament's positions and requests for legislative initiatives? In relation to planned initiatives or ongoing procedures, are you ready to provide Parliament with information and documents on an equal footing with the Council?

It would be a great honour and true privilege to join the College of Commissioners under the leadership of president von der Leyen, if I am confirmed by the European Parliament. This Parliament that has showed great leadership on the European Green Deal and the Climate Action agenda, and I would fully commit to working with Parliament as much as possible to cement that leadership and to take it further.

As a Member of the College, I would ensure full continuity in the Climate Action portfolio, and would work closely together with Executive Vice-President Šefčovič to ensure this. I would also work in unison with my other colleagues in the Commissioners Group for the European Green Deal, Commissioners Sinkevičius, Kyriakides, Simson, Valean, Ferreira, and Wojciechowski. It would be a great honour and pleasure to become part of a team that has already made great progress in the delivery of the European Green Deal.

Working together on the European Green Deal and Climate Action requires cooperation built on trust and the fullest extent of transparency possible. I fully commit to cooperation in good faith with the European Parliament as far as the Framework Agreement for cooperation with Parliament could take us together. This applies to the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), but any other Committee with an interest in the climate action portfolio and a need for dialogue and cooperation.

I would be available to participate in Parliamentary debates and commit to fully play the Commission's role within the legislative process in the trilogues that will still take place this mandate, in full respect of the Inter-Institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making and the Framework Agreement between our two institutions. For me, being an honest broker ahead of and during such discussions would be built on treating the co-legislators, Parliament and Council, as complete equals. I fully commit to doing so, respecting this Parliament's position as co-legislator under the EU Treaties, especially in an area where it has consistently shown true leadership.

In line with the Framework Agreement, I am also committed to do my utmost so to ensure the Commission's response to European Parliament resolutions under my portfolio are replied within three months. I am ready to contribute to this Commission's impeccable track record in following up on the art. 225 European Parliament resolutions as committed in the Political Guidelines of President von der Leyen. I would accept meeting requests, letters, and questions from Members of Parliament to my utmost capacity and with maximum speed.

The above concerns the institutional framework for the cooperation with this Parliament. However, should this Parliament endorse me as a Commissioner, the spirit for such cooperation matters just as much for our interactions, and perhaps even more, as does the letter of this framework.

When it comes to transparency and sharing information, I would therefore take along my particular experience in the Dutch parliamentary system. Having been elected three times, twice in the Senate and once in the Lower House, and having worked on policies and laws, both as member of parliament and minister, I am deeply aware of the importance of good working relationships.

It is what helped us get broad support in Netherlands for quick weapons deliveries to Ukraine and pass the measures necessary to respond to the pandemic and its aftermath. I am convinced that open and honest cooperation is the basis of solid legislation. Whilst not every single file would be easy for us to agree on – such is the nature of politics – I want to assure you that my door would always be open to all of the Members of the European Parliament to discuss and explore where we can find common ground.

The European Parliament, an institution directly elected by hundreds of millions of Europeans across 27 Member States, is an important channel for the voice of our citizens. Whenever it is possible, I would be happy to accept engagements in Member States to meet citizens, together with you to discuss their concerns and wishes for the future. President von der Leyen expects Commissioners to travel to the different EU Member States whenever their agenda allows for it, and this is of course a commitment I fully share.

In this manner, I would commit to improve dialogue, foster confidence and a sense of working together towards a common goal. Especially in a field like climate action, there is no other way.

Question 3

What do you see as the key elements of the EU's climate change diplomacy to raise the ambition of all major emitters in line with the timeline agreed under the Paris Agreement; what are your priorities for the COP28 and how do you intend to make the Loss and Damage Finance Facility operational? Will you defend a fossil fuel phase-out with a timeline consistent with the Paris Agreement, in addition to the ambition to triple the world renewables target?

A key objective of my portfolio is to expand our climate diplomacy and to project our ambition outside the EU, both in multilateral and bilateral settings. We need to persuade a critical mass of countries, in particular major emitters, to act to keep the 1.5°C temperature limit within reach. I will work bilaterally with China, the US, the United Arab Emirates, India, Brazil and all countries that wish to engage on a decarbonisation path, through high level policy dialogues, joint cooperation projects and technical assistance.

At the multilateral level, COP28 is a very important milestone in our international climate agenda. The current geopolitical context is difficult, and unfortunately some are questioning the need for increased ambition to meet the Paris temperature goals.

I will be promoting the highest possible ambition in our COP decisions. I will engage with all Parties, notably the G20 countries, in close cooperation with our progressive allies in Least Developed Countries, the Small Island Developing States, the Latin Americans and others such as Norway, Switzerland and the UK. The progressive alliance that helped clinch the deal on the Paris Agreement must remain united on the importance of reducing emissions and placing the objective of keeping 1.5C within reach at the centre of COP28. In parallel, I will work to broaden the alliance as much as possible.

This COP is key because it will mark the first Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement. The Global Stocktake was designed to assess our global response to the climate crisis and inform Parties as they enhance their actions and support. We need it to ratchet up global climate ambition and thus inform the next round of nationally determined contributions to be put forward by 2025.

*At COP 28, a lot of attention will also be placed on **climate finance**. Developed country Parties made a commitment to deliver USD 100bn in climate finance and are expected to achieve this objective this year. The EU is and remains firmly committed to this goal and to the doubling of adaptation finance – fulfilling our fair share of public international climate finance. In addition, we need to follow up on the COP27 decision to transform the financial system and its structures and processes. This means talking to governments, central banks, commercial banks, institutional investors, and other financial actors.*

The scale and depth of this transformation is such that it requires a shift of trillions. This cannot possibly be met through the donors' public finance contributions alone. The Paris Agreement can only be achieved when global financial flows, including private finance and investment, national budgets and Official Development Assistance (ODA) all support climate objectives, and I will use my experience and network as former minister of Finance to the fullest to help advance this shift. Succeeding in this mission also means that we must stop

*investments that undermine these goals. **Phasing out fossil fuel subsidies is critically important.***

*On Loss and Damage, **the Sharm El Sheikh decision for Loss and Damage funding arrangements, including a fund, was a historic milestone and a strong signal of solidarity with the most vulnerable. The EU has been instrumental in achieving this outcome. To continue demonstrating our credibility as a partner and bridge builder, we will need to engage constructively to assist communities and countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, such as Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States. This assistance should address short-term impacts of climate disasters while also building long-term resilience.***

*We should make full use and build on the broader Loss and Damage funding arrangements, because one fund on its own will not be the silver bullet. **We will need a lot of finance and we will have to be open to explore innovative, creative and even unorthodox solutions as well.** The funding arrangements and the fund must be able to draw on the widest possible sources of funding, from all countries that are in a position to provide support, as well as the private sector, philanthropies and other innovative sources.*

*At COP28, I would furthermore work to reach the following outcomes: **a commitment to peaking global emissions by 2025; the tripling of renewable energy installed capacity and the doubling of the rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030, linked to a phaseout of unabated fossil fuels.** The International Energy Agency previews the need for a peak in the global fossil fuel consumption well ahead of 2030. If appointed as Commissioner for Climate Action, I would intensify my outreach to push for these outcomes. I count on all Member States and the European Parliament to help us in this effort. We need to work together to make this a reality at the COP.*

Given the growing importance of adaptation, I want to convince a higher number of countries to design and communicate National Adaptation Plans and strategies to inform on the successes achieved, the gaps and shortcomings, including maladaptation. They should identify ways to mainstream the adaptation policy cycle (risk assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) and include key targets and indicators to guide action through all sectors and ecosystems and help measure progress on enhancing resilience.

This implies that countries conduct climate risk assessments, have in place early warning systems, have established inclusive and transparent national adaptation planning processes and have mainstreamed adaptation into all relevant strategies and plans. It requires they implement, as well as monitor and evaluate their National Adaptation Plans.

Were I to obtain the endorsement of this Parliament, you could count on me in the coming weeks before and during the COP: I would fully dedicate myself to bilateral and multilateral engagements with all Parties.

After COP, I will continue this outreach as well, including through our bilateral instruments. Building on the success of the European Emission Trading System, I will promote carbon pricing and emission trading policies around the world. Carbon pricing is not only the most cost-effective way to reduce emissions, but it also spurs innovation and raises revenues to finance the green transition. This includes work in our Neighbourhood, where I will strongly

encourage candidate countries, through the Energy Community, to embrace the European Green Deal.

A strong and effective EU climate diplomacy requires steps and actions that also cater to the needs and specific situation of countries, from the Global North to the Global South, and special attention for the plight of countries that are vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which will also be addressed further down. I want to pursue the engagement by Executive Vice President Frans Timmermans with the partner countries that have committed to climate neutrality by 2050 or are displaying ambitious climate policies.

I will ensure that our Green Alliances and Partnerships with Japan, Norway, South Korea and Morocco stimulate a dynamic cooperation, on all areas of the Green Deal, including energy transition, decarbonisation and the circular economy. I will pursue the conclusion of the Green Alliance with Canada before the end of the year. I will continue to engage in the implementation of Just Energy Transition Partnerships with South Africa, Viet Nam, Indonesia and Senegal to demonstrate how the strategic deployment of financial resources can support a just energy transition. In the context of the highest possible climate ambition these partnerships should lead to economic development while leaving no one behind.

Question 4

Do you commit to swiftly present an ambitious proposal for a binding and science-based target for 2040, as well as an indicative GHG budget for the 2030-2050 period in line with the Climate Law and how will you take into account the advice of the European Scientific Advisory Committee on Climate Change?

As a first step under my political guidance and together with EVP Šefčovič, DG CLIMA would pursue the necessary work so that the Commission could publish a detailed impact assessment of different targets based on an emissions budget. The impact assessment would be accompanied by a Communication, along with a report on the indicative greenhouse gas budget.

This Communication would not be limited to assessing different options. Instead, I would propose that the Commission take a position on the different options analysed in the impact assessment. My aim is that the Commission would adopt the communication and its impact assessment in the first quarter of 2024. The responses to the public consultation completed in June of this year already demonstrate strong support for continued climate ambition.

As Commissioner for Climate, I would take utmost account of the advice of the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change in preparing the assessment. I would work within the Commission to follow the principles of Better Regulation, which means assessing the full impacts on the economy, on society and on the environment, focusing on both ambition and feasibility.

The publication of the Commission communication will provide for an informed discussion in the months ahead on the 2040 target that is needed to cost-efficiently achieve our 2050 climate neutrality goal. The next Commission, following the European Parliament elections, will then be in a position to adopt the proposal for amending the European Climate Law and other proposals required to achieve the 2040 target.

Question 5

How will you facilitate the adoption of the ongoing climate legislative proposals such as the CRCF and CO2 standards for heavy duty vehicles, and how will you ensure the implementation of CO2 standards for cars and vans in line with the adopted legislative framework; how will you ensure a just transition and which proposals do you commit to presenting by the end of the term; which actions will you take to promote investments in new clean technologies and to ensure EU competitiveness and regulatory certainty while upholding EU climate standards?

If appointed as Commissioner for Climate Action and working closely with Parliament and Council, I would facilitate the swift conclusion of all pending proposals including carbon removals certification framework and CO2 standards for heavy-duty vehicles as an honest broker before the end of this Commission mandate.

In addition to the work on the above files, I would continue the Commission's work to implement the Regulation on CO2 standards for cars and vans, including preparation of the necessary delegated and implementing acts that were the result of the co-decision process. Enabling the transition towards zero-emission mobility is key to stay on the pathway to climate neutrality, and we are fully dedicated to ensuring that this transition is a success.

This Parliament has inserted some first provisions on a just transition framework in the CO2 performance standards for cars and vans, and I would do my utmost to turn those provisions on paper into a reality for industry, workers and citizens, and to build on that achievement of Parliament with further steps as necessary. Generally, I would work closely with Executive Vice President Šefčovič and Commissioner Valean and Commissioner Breton for vehicles towards a transport policy that contributes to our climate objectives, that ensures an effective transition for industry and a just transition for workers and citizens, and that ensures a transport sector that is almost entirely emissions-free by 2050.

The Fit for 55 package is our agenda to fight climate change, to deliver on the objectives set in the European Climate Law to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least -55% by 2030, and to set the European Union firmly on track towards climate neutrality in 2050. The package is also part and parcel of our jobs and growth agenda, and our agenda to lead on the development and deployment of sustainable fuels and clean technologies, which represent a fast-growing global market.

If appointed as Commissioner for Climate Action, I would pursue the work in the Commission towards strengthening that arm of the European Green Deal. To foster Europe's leadership on clean technologies, I would ensure the swift implementation of all measures under the Fit for 55 package in the most cost-efficient manner, in a form and shape that allows industry to invest effectively to reach the level of ambition set and providing the regulatory certainty and stability for industry and the private sector to invest in clean technology and strengthen its competitiveness.

I would accelerate the implementation of the Innovation Fund, the world's largest clean tech fund as financed by revenues of the EU ETS, with an expected budget of EUR 40bn until 2030. In November, I would launch the first ever European auction for the production of renewable hydrogen with a budget of EUR 800mn. At the same time, I would launch a major call with an increased budget for innovative low carbon projects, including industrial

decarbonization of energy intensive industries and clean tech manufacturing (solar, wind, batteries, electrolysers, heat pumps) and with space for the role of our start-up and scale-up companies that often have winning technologies.

Some next steps to turn our European Green Deal into Europe's growth strategy are already underway. In the context of the Net Zero Industry Act, for example, I find it essential to work with Council and Parliament regarding the Commission's proposed target of 50Mt of storage capacity by 2030. This is particularly important for sectors with hard to abate emissions that want to invest in capturing CO₂, but where the CO₂ storage infrastructure is lacking.

I would also contribute to facilitate a swift agreement on the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform that proposes to reinforce, steer and leverage key EU funds, including the Innovation Fund, towards investments in critical technologies needed for the green and digital transition. I would play my full role as Commissioner for Climate Action to support further initiatives that enable our industry to invest in the strategic technologies needed for the green transition.

Just Transition is a key principle of the Green Deal and of Climate Action. If appointed as Commissioner for Climate Action, I would deepen the dialogue with trade unions and the various citizen organisations to make it a reality. As a first next step, I would work with Member States towards a timely and effective implementation of the Social Climate Fund to support the most vulnerable households and companies subject to energy and transport poverty and – alongside Executive Vice-President Šefčovič and Commissioner Ferreira – towards the good use and operation of the Just Transition Fund in the regions most affected by the clean energy transition.

Question 6

In order to strengthen the link between climate action and biodiversity, how do you intend to develop the EU's policies on climate change adaptation and what measures will you propose; how will you support nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches to climate action; which action will you take to increase natural carbon sinks in line with the "do no significant harm" principle in LULUCF?

There are many links between nature, biodiversity, healthy ecosystems and the climate: they are intimately intertwined through the planetary processes of the carbon and water cycles. For both mitigation and adaptation, nature is our best ally in the fight against climate change.

A number of European instruments already acknowledge these links. The European Climate Law, the EU 2021 Adaptation Strategy, the EU taxonomy, the Horizon Europe Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change, the Common Agricultural Policy and other acts and actions already give prominence to the nature-based solutions in the service of better adaptation, be it in the policy frameworks, priority of solutions being deployed or sign-posting potential private investors to the right areas of investments. The Nature Restoration Law would also guide Member States in their efforts to ensure several win-wins for biodiversity and climate. Given the close links between climate, nature and biodiversity, as a Member of College I would support Executive Vice President Maros Šefčovič and Commissioner Sinkevičius in

their role as honest broker between Parliament and Council on this file, also by pointing to the significant synergies for our climate goals.

Currently, the EU land use sector absorbs more greenhouse gases than it emits, making it a net carbon removal or a carbon sink. Nevertheless, carbon removals have significantly decreased in recent years, and the carbon sink function on land overall is in decline.

The revised LULUCF Regulation will help reverse this trend through binding national net removal targets, delivering -310 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent by 2030 across the EU. This action needs to be implemented through nature-based actions and I will pay particular attention to the measures that Member States plan to take, to ensure a proper implementation of the LULUCF legislation – starting with the assessment of the draft updated National Energy and Climate Plans where the respective policies and measures to achieve these goals should be set out.

To leverage action and support the creation of new business models, for example carbon farming in wetlands and forests, the proposed Carbon Removals Certification Regulation – that co-legislators are currently discussing – will set up the harmonised monitoring, reporting and verification framework, needed to scale-up land-based carbon removals that deliver both climate and biodiversity benefits.

Looking at the intensifying and increasing impacts of climate change, it is clear that building further resilience to climate change will require action in a broad range of policy fields. Adaptation and societal preparedness concerns land management, as well as human health, critical infrastructure, and macro-fiscal policies. Where nature-based solutions are applicable, these should be used to the full. Where doing so may not be enough to contain the risks, nature-based solutions should be supported by technical solutions.

As is stated in the Mission letter the President von der Leyen addressed to me and if appointed as Commissioner for Climate Action, I would oversee the work on preparedness to climate-related risks. For the first time ever, the European Climate Risk Assessment report, due next spring, will evaluate the exposure of key EU policies, European citizens, the economy and nature to climate risks. The report will also identify climate risk owners and those best placed to act. The findings will inform the identification of priorities for the new Commission and help us to develop more climate resilient and robust policies and instruments for the future.

Question 7

Will you push for an international agreement on ending fossil fuel subsidies, and what measures will you take to phase out fossil fuel subsidies within the EU, as foreseen by the European Environmental Action Programme?

The EU's Eighth Environment Action Programme as well as our international commitments rightly call for an immediate phase out of fossil fuel subsidies. Policy coherence is a key factor for the successful implementation of the Green Deal, and fossil fuels subsidies, especially over the long run, are a good example of a policy that doesn't fit with our efforts to decarbonise our economy and society.

I am fully committed to pursue additional actions to phase out fossil fuel subsidies. Last year's energy crisis has led to a number of temporary actions that to some extent did the opposite. This was necessary to shield vulnerable households and businesses from the impact

of Russia's weaponization of energy, but it should not divert us from our overarching objectives.

Fossil fuel subsidies weigh heavily on public finances in many countries, reducing fiscal space for investments in the green transition. They pose a series of significant risks, i.e. undermining the effectiveness of carbon price signals, thereby hindering a smooth energy transition; reducing fiscal space for investments in a clean economy, increasing the risks of 'locking in' high-carbon investments and of investing in assets which need to be decommissioned before the end of their lifetime; and finally distorting the market, by making clean energy and energy-efficiency technologies that are also better for public health as they tackle air pollution, relatively more expensive.

At European level, to give an example, I think we must accelerate the work on the adoption of the revised Energy Taxation Directive that is a key pillar of the Fit for 55 package. The Commission's proposal from July 2021 includes key elements that would already address many current discrepancies and exemptions. Its adoption and implementation would significantly reduce fossil fuel subsidies in the EU. This includes reducing taxation of electricity, which is currently taxed higher than coal and gas, and removing the prohibition in EU law on kerosene taxation as soon as possible, replacing it by levels similar to other sectors. If appointed as Commissioner for Climate Action, I would work hand in hand with Commissioner Gentiloni to try and accelerate the work towards adoption of the revision of the Energy Taxation Directive.

We know that pricing the externalities of fossil fuels more equally is also very effective. An important step forward will be the implementation of the extension of the EU emission trading system towards the building and road transport and maritime sectors.

The update of the National Energy and Climate Plans should also be used by Member States to become more proactive in sketching how they plan to phase out fossil fuel subsidies. I see the preparation and finalisation of these Plans as a great opportunity to cooperate between the Commission and the Member States and between Member States.

Our action within Europe is also needed to follow-up on our international commitments. I am committed to work with our international partners at multilateral and plurilateral level to pursue global action to phase out fossil fuel subsidies.