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Belgisch statement op de VN-klimaatconferentie COP26

Lees hier het integrale Belgisch statement uitgesproken door Eerste Minister Alexander De Croo op de VN-klimaatconferentie COP26 in Glasgow.

Mr./s. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Climate change has arrived, and it has arrived with a vengeance.

The fire storms that rage through our forests. The heat waves that kill our crops and vaporize our drinking water supplies. The floods in our villages. The 41 people who died in such floods in my country last July, the first Belgian citizens who fell victim to climate change. Other countries and other continents already paid a much higher price, but for us, that was something far away. Something on TV. Not anymore.

Climate change is hitting home, also in Europe.

The report by the International Panel on Climate Change makes for a very sobering read indeed. The increase in carbon dioxide concentration and the increase in global temperature are unprecedented. The report leaves us with one conclusion only: we need a rapid and large-scale reduction of CO2 emissions to bring the one and a half degrees goal within reach. There really is no time to lose. We are behind schedule and need to pick up the pace.

So, we need to do more. And it needs to happen here, in Glasgow.

We simply cannot afford not to act. We simply cannot lean back and wait for the next flood, the next heatwave, or the next forest fire to kill and destroy. That is why Belgium, and the European Union are undertaking action.

What is Belgium doing?

We are investing to remain one of the world's leading producers of offshore wind energy. We will triple our offshore capacity by the end of the decade. That will cover the electricity need of every single household in my country. We will build an energy island to connect our offshore sites, a giant socket linking renewable energy production around the North Sea. We have the clear ambition to become one of the most important hubs in clean hydrogen supply. To strengthen the resilience of the most fragile countries, we are increasing our contribution to international climate finance with sixty percent. And we will contribute with 200 million euro to the fight against deforestation.

With the Green Deal, the European Union intends to be climate neutral by 2050 and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030. Europe has a historic responsibility regarding climate change. That is why we take the lead, but we are not the only ones to shoulder that responsibility.

The other major economies should urgently take equivalent action. Join Europe's ambitions. They should do so for their own benefit. Because sustainability is not only a matter of saving lives, it is also about protecting livelihoods. About building a new economy, creating new jobs, reconnecting with green economic growth, leveraging the innovative strength of our companies for a more sustainable future. Otherwise, we will not get back on track to what we agreed in Paris.

The world is full of talent to make that happen. There are plenty of bright minds who are working on climate solutions as we speak: in our world-class universities, in our forward-looking companies. Young people working from the garage of their parents will come up with climate solutions we're not even aware of today. We need to help people and companies make this transition.

And we need to ensure this new economy is inclusive as well, making sure that everyone is on board. That climate transition is not only something for rich people in rich countries, because then, we will fail.

So, everyone needs to be part of the change. That sustainable technologies are affordable. That the energy bill goes down thanks to renewables. That women and men have the right skills for new, green jobs.

We can do this. Europe can do this. The world can do this. We either overcome the climate crisis together, or we do not overcome it at all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There has been plenty of time for long speeches and lofty ambitions, now it is time for action, starting today. This is not just another perfunctory summit we routinely attend. We are here out of sheer necessity and urgency. It's all hands on deck now. To do the job for which we were elected or appointed. To keep our people safe from harm - the very first task of any government, whatever its constitutional and political set-up, to make sure our societies prosper, to make our economies reconnect with growth that is sustainable.

We still can reach the Paris objectives.

We have the scientific analysis. We have the technological solutions at hand. We are raising the money we need. And we have the talent that is coming up with innovative answers as we speak. This is a challenge where young women and men lead the way.

Now, we need to muster the political will. That's why we are here. The Glasgow conference is about political will. It is about the long-term perspective which requires action now. About making the climate transition happen, while leaving no one behind, so that we come out stronger. More resilient.

The world has come together here in Glasgow.

Let us find that willpower and start to turn the tide.

Thank you.

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