



Building EU Climate Ambition in the International Climate Negotiations – How the EU Can Strengthen and Build New Alliances for a Global Climate Deal in Paris¹

Europe is on the back foot and could take a much more proactive role in shaping the Paris 2015 agreement. Whilst the G2 dynamic can inject positive momentum, there is a broad understanding that China and the US alone cannot agree on all the elements of a deal. Europe has an opportunity for strategic leadership which can build thematic alliances to construct an ambitious and fair global climate deal which best reflects the objectives of Europe and its allies.

Paris is not Europe's Copenhagen II

The release of the latest IPCC report indicates that urgency is greater than ever. Europe is exposed to a number of risks including, an increased risk of coastal flooding, more frequent heat waves and restrictions in water availability. This will result in significant economic losses, health impacts, decreasing labour productivity and impacts on food security.

The EU's natural leadership cannot be assumed this time around. The EU's mitigation offer, a GHG target of at

least 40% as embedded in the 2030 decision, is currently insufficient to act as a benchmark to spiral ambition from other developed and emerging economy countries. EU leadership is also hampered by the failure of developed countries to fulfil promises made to developing countries. A number of broken promises, especially on climate finance, have led to a lack of trust and put the EU's credibility at stake.

However, there are also a number of positive steps that have been taken. The European low carbon transition is evolving and the EU has succeeded in decoupling economic growth and emissions increase. Europe has led by example to inform about climate policy around the world. The US are adopting a far more progressive position on mitigation, China is orientating its economic restructuring to encompass climate action and many vulnerable countries are pursuing resilient development. This shows that Europe is not alone in taking action on climate change. A new understanding is emerging of the role a global agreement can play and this is aligning parties to value collective action on climate change.

¹ The policy brief is based on a roundtable discussion that was held under Chatham House Rule on 7 October 2014 as part of the Brussels Dialogue Series "From Warsaw to Paris – The 2015 Momentum" on EU ambition in the international climate regime. The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung and E3G.

A collective Paris 2015 agreement

There was broad consensus that a G2 agreement would not fulfil the requirements to create an agreement which reflects the interests of the majority of Parties under the UNFCCC. Europe has a strategic opportunity to shape the debate on finance and adaptation.

The US's active diplomacy sends a clear signal that they see the value of a collective action on climate change but Europe has not begun to build the alliances needed to incorporate European interests into the Paris deal. Europe's natural allies – the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC) and the Least Developing Countries (LDC's) are increasingly focused on adaptation, loss and damage and finance. Europe has the opportunity to co-develop thematic alliances on these topics.

The EU could make better use of its reputation as a role model on managing the opportunities and challenges of a low carbon transition. For example, a joint commitment towards renewable energy as the most cost effective way forward could form a key pillar for a new alliance. There are further European opportunities for proactive diplomacy. EU-China collaboration could yield positive results on low carbon investments and finance; an area which China is taking great strides. Brazil can be an important ally on supporting rules based regimes. In addition, collaboration with the US is at present also under-explored especially given the fact that the US administration is the most aligned it ever has been with European objectives on climate change, presenting a considerable opportunity.

Beyond state action, the civil society is proving to be a reenergised force for the low carbon transition. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in places across the world prior to the Climate Summit to demonstrate their commitment. The diversity of those who attended was particularly stark, it is clear the choir is growing beyond the usual suspects to a much broader group. The momentum is growing and unlikely to stop after the COP 21 in Paris.

The private sector is also increasingly recognising the economic opportunities of transition and economic exposure of inaction, a point reinforced by the recent New Climate Economy report. While Paris could create a locus to stimulate climate action, there remains uncertainty as to how to capture these dynamics for the Paris agreement.

Re-understanding Europe's climate leadership

Showing leadership beyond mitigation ambition will be necessary if Europe wants to have a hand in shaping

the Paris agreement in its interests. Europe should be bold about using its climate finance offer strategically and creating space for alignment on the loss and damage conversation. Having an offer on climate finance early on, rather than at the last minute, would give the EU greater leverage to shape the global regime.

Europe must build credibility and trust with its allies to create productive common interest alliances that utilise historical ties but move beyond colonial assumptions. The Peru-French COP Presidencies provide an opportunity to bridge the divide between developed and developing nations to build stronger alignment.

At present, Europe is under-prepared to build alliances with its potential allies and needs to urgently strengthen its diplomatic strategy. Champions within the EU are lacking and investment is needed to create platforms and opportunities for personality driven leadership.

Strengthening EU Diplomacy

There are a number of opportunities to aid the development of the European position and strengthen EU climate diplomacy:

- *An EU Climate Envoy* – Since the energy and climate commission positions have merged, Europe lacks a consistent champion on climate change. An envoy would help drive European diplomatic outreach and commitment to the Paris 2015 agreement.

- *A reinvigorated Green diplomacy network* – Strengthen the green diplomacy network by setting clear goals and asks. With strong Member States backing, assign duties to different Member States. The European External Action Service (EEAS) has the machinery in place; we just need to build the will and momentum behind it.

- *The European Parliament can have a stronger role to push the Commission & Council and hold them accountable for their climate strategy* – It's important we find common ground in the European Parliament to create support and build alliances.

- *Increased European support to facilitate clean energy access* – The post-2015 development process and COP 21 in Paris can stimulate opportunities for Europe to assist countries in expanding access to clean energy.

- *Developing Europe's positioning on adaptation, finance and loss and damage early* – To build thematic alliances which shape the Paris 2015 agreement.

Overall, the EU is doing a lot but needs to make the best use of this in their diplomacy. Strengthening EU climate diplomacy tools, networks and positions on adaptation, finance and loss and damage will be very important to shape the Paris 2015 agreement.