



Briefing on EU Climate Policy – processes and assessment

*In advance of stakeholder meeting with Mr Mauro Petriccione,
Director-General for Climate Action at the European Commission, Dublin May 17 2019*

Briefing on the EU Long-term Strategy

- This briefing has been prepared by the Stop Climate Chaos coalition¹ for representatives from progressive civil society attending the meeting with the Director-General for Climate Action on the European Commission's Communication, "*A clean planet for all*" – *the EU Long Term strategy for climate neutral economy.*"
- The purpose of this document is to provide a background context on the Commission's Communication, and what this means for climate policy and climate action in Ireland.
- We hope this briefing will prove useful for developing questions in advance of the meeting. Having this information will enable us to capitalise on the opportunity the meeting presents, and should help initiate follow-on conversations within the Irish climate movement.

Background to the development of the EU Long-term Strategy

- The **2015 Paris Agreement** under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) sets the goal to contain the rise in average global temperatures to well below 2°C (above pre-industrial levels) and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.² All Parties to the Paris Agreement are invited to **submit mid-century strategies by 2020.**

¹ Stop Climate Chaos is the civil society coalition campaigning for Ireland to do its fair share to tackle climate change. The Coalition's 33 members include overseas aid and development, environmental, community, youth and faith-based organisations: Afri, BirdWatch Ireland, Christian Aid Ireland, Comhlámh, Community Work Ireland, Concern Worldwide, Cultivate, Cyclist.ie, Dublin Friends of the Earth, Eco Congregation Ireland, ECO UNESCO, Feasta, Fossil Free TCD, Friends of the Earth, Good Energies Alliance Ireland, Self Help Africa, Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, Just Forests, Latin America Solidarity Centre (LASC), Liberia Solidarity Group, Methodist Church of Ireland – Council of Social Responsibility, Mountmellick Environmental Group, National Youth Council of Ireland, Oxfam Ireland, Peoples Climate Ireland, Presentation Ireland, Tearfund Ireland, Trócaire, An Taisce, VITA, V.O.I.C.E., and Young Friends of the Earth.

² The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued in late 2018 its [Special Report](#) on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Drawing on scientific evidence, the report shows that global warming has already reached 1°C above preindustrial levels. Without stepping up international climate action, global average temperature increase could reach 2°C soon after 2060 and continue rising afterwards. The IPCC report confirms that the world needs to limit climate change to 1.5°C to reduce the likelihood of severe, irreversible climate change. It also warns that emissions need to be reduced with considerable urgency.



- In response, the European Parliament (in October 2017) and the European Council (in March 2018) invited the European Commission to present a **Long-term Strategy (LTS)** on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions for the European Union, in accordance with the goals of the Paris Agreement. The LTS exist alongside National Energy and Climate Plans as the main tools for delivering on the EU's climate and energy targets.
- On 28 November 2018, the Commission presented its strategic LTS for a [climate-neutral](#) economy by 2050, entitled [A Clean Planet for All](#).

What does the Long-term Strategy set out to do?

- The aim of the LTS is to **provide a pathway** that the EU should consider as its long-term contribution to achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The LTS aims to set out how to **scale up climate action** from *incremental* to *transformational*, across all sectors of society and economy. It should be noted that in 2009, the EU set its objective to reduce emissions by 80-95% in 2050.
- **IMPORTANTLY:** The strategy is not a legislative proposal. It is instead, a **strategic vision** that draws on detailed analysis of a portfolio of options, to indicate how the EU can meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement.³
- **IMPORTANTLY:** The European Commission has confirmed that the LTS **will not seek to revise 2030 targets**.⁴ Instead, it proposes that the vision will **enable the EU to build on existing targets** with policies oriented towards 2050. However, there are considerable **discrepancies** between the 2030 target, current long-term projections, and what the EU hopes to achieve by 2050 (see footnote 5 below).
- The Strategy is interested in linking economic development with emission reductions, and therefore relies on technology innovation, labour market & skills development, development of the circular economy, regional cohesion, economic structural policies (taxes and incentives), etc. The Strategy also recognises the role of biodiversity preservation and restoration, and nature-based solutions, in mitigating climate change.

³ The Commission claims that by presenting this vision, it will **generate debate** among policy makers, stakeholders and citizens within member states to consider how the EU can meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement in a way that is socially fair and inclusive (the LTS includes a template on *just transition*).

⁴ EU climate and energy policies aim to reduce emissions by at least 40% by 2030 compared to 1990. If the agreed EU legislation is fully implemented, total greenhouse gas emission reductions are estimated at around 45% by 2030. However, this puts the EU on an emissions reduction of 60% by 2050. To align with a 1.5 temperature objective, the EU must achieve greenhouse gas emissions neutrality by 2050.



- According to the Commission, the road to a **climate neutral economy** will require joint action in **seven strategic areas** (these are outlined in more detail in the Commission's [Communication](#)):
 1. energy efficiency,
 2. deployment of renewables,
 3. clean, safe and connected mobility,
 4. competitive industry and circular economy,
 5. infrastructure and interconnections,
 6. bio-economy and natural carbon sinks (this area may be of interest to members of the Environmental Pillar, especially in terms of the sustainable supply of biomass balanced with use of & enhancing land for carbon storage),
 7. and carbon capture and storage to address remaining emissions.
- The EU is required to adopt and submit the final LTS to the UNFCCC **by 2020**.
- According to Europe's largest coalition working on climate and energy, Climate Action Network ([CAN](#)) Europe, "The draft Long Term Strategy is [the ideal opportunity](#) for the EU to identify how it could pursue efforts to limit temperature to 1.5°C. At the moment, the adoption of the Long Term Strategy is the only political process through which the EU can show it is pursuing efforts towards 1.5°C. If not in this strategy, where else will the EU do this?"

How have NGOs responded?

- In their assessment of the EU's draft LTS, CAN Europe argue that the current roadmap **will not be sufficient** to meet the EU's fair share of efforts to meet the 1.5°C Paris objective. CAN highlight that the scenarios presented in the LTS reflect a 2°C range in temperature increase, but not the full range of 1.5°C compatible pathway with the Paris objective.
- **IMPORTANTLY:** Drawing on assessed available scenarios presented in the recent IPCC SR 1.5 report (2018), CAN Europe [make the case](#) that, **in order to be compatible with the 1.5°C scenario:**
 - **the EU needs to achieve net zero emissions by 2040.** Such a scenario is missing from the Long Term Strategy.



- Countries **need to substantially increase their 2030 targets**. The LTS does not include a proposal to increase the 2030 target. This means that radical policies and measures will be required to achieve full delivery of the net zero target within a very short time-frame.
- **CAN have called for the LTS to include:**
 - An outline of how the EU intends to limit temperature rise to 1.5C in an equitable manner & in line with the remaining global carbon budget. They emphasise the role of improved land stewardship/importance of natural carbon sinks.
 - Milestones for a revised 2030 target and for every five years thereafter.
 - A rapid & full phase out of fossil fuels – to be replaced by a full efficient 100% renewable energy system by 2050.
 - Sectoral pathways for full decarbonisation.
 - A comparison of costs and benefits of action with the total cost of inaction, urgent lifestyle changes and a reduction in energy demand, and support of citizen and community engagement.
- The legal instrument that regulates how Member States must deliver the LTS does not specify the specific steps that they have to take in order to be compliant with their **international obligations under the Aarhus Convention**. Clarity around public participation will be an important question for Friday's meeting.

What does this mean for Ireland?

- Like other member states, Ireland must submit to the European Commission by the end of 2019, their final **National Climate and Energy Plans (NECP)**. These Plans are central for the achievement of the 2030 climate and energy targets and must take the EU LTS into account. **Ireland's NECP must make reference to the 2050 strategy.**
- A [report](#) launched this week by the European Climate Foundation found that Ireland scored 38/100 on an assessment of its draft NECP. The highest score achieved (by Spain) was 52/100. Considerable progress must be made between now and end of year, if Ireland is to improve its NECP to reflect the urgency of the challenge. Both the Plan and the LTS **must be consistent and coherent** with each other, and in line with a net zero vision.



- The LTS **does not have a binding nature**, but there will be guidance from the Commission on what needs to be included by member states. Although non-binding, the process should not be dismissed.
- Ireland must submit its **final version** LTS on January 2020 – with a perspective of at least 30 years. **What should they cover?**
 - Must contribute to the Paris Agreement
 - Sector-specific emission reductions and sink enhancements, incl. electricity, industry, transport, heating and cooling/buildings (residential and tertiary), agriculture, waste, and LULUCF
 - Expected progress on transition to a low greenhouse gas emission economy (incl. GHG intensity, CO2 intensity of GDP, related estimates of long-term investment, and strategies for related research, development and innovation)
 - Impact assessment, including macro-economic and social development, health risks and benefits and environmental protection
- **Importantly: Public consultation?** This will be the same as provided for the NECP process: “early and effective participation/reasonable timeframes/report”, and must include multilevel stakeholder dialogue.
- In April, **Stop Climate Chaos and the Environmental Pillar** sent a letter to Minister Bruton asking that the final National Energy and Climate Plan and LTS reflect the soon-to-be published All-of-Government Plan and the recommendations of the recent report from the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action.

Stop Climate Chaos Coalition

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