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The European Union has played a leading role in the fight for global sustainability. Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth has been a manifest goal for the EU since at least 2010. However, without effective action being coordinated among the member states and even more importantly, among global partners, good slogans can remain just a mantra.

The 2015 Paris Agreement provides evidence that progress is possible if advocacy and diplomacy remain focused on what is really important. But the subsequent years have also shown that what has been achieved needs to be consolidated, otherwise a slow-burning crisis easily turns into a real emergency. And that is exactly where we are at the moment.

A good deal of time has already been wasted without proper implementation of the green agenda or serious discussion about how to change our way of life, especially our consumption patterns, in order to achieve a just transition. Those who consider the protection of their privileges more important want to sideline the climate debate entirely. It is therefore very important to ensure, for example, that hostility to science does not prevail and lead to a setback in climate action.

Our societies may not be entirely divided according to age groups, but it is definitely true that young people in most countries are highly motivated in the discussion on climate change and look for opportunities to act as well. This high motivation should not only lead to greater ambition, but also to a more formalised engagement of youth in consultations as well as actual decision making on climate-related issues.

Social inequalities hinder the political capacity to protect the climate. This is also why programmes aiming at a better economy and ecology have to be connected and reconciled. Those using the phrase “Green New Deal” highlight the need for a



more regulated capitalism that allows not only for measures strengthening social cohesion but also for the protection of our climate and tackling environmental degradation. We have a deficit on both sides, which means that efforts have to be redoubled.

The original New Deal was a historic achievement of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and so was the United Nations. The UN remains the most important forum for promoting global cooperation as well as solidarity, without which climate justice would just remain an idea. Institutions serving multilateral governance must be improved, not destroyed. From a European point of view, the advocacy of climate justice goes hand in hand with the defence of multilateralism.

While Europe has been in a pole position in these efforts, we cannot sit on our laurels. The European business model itself has to be revamped. Some countries still depend excessively on socially-useless financial activities, while others have tied themselves to automotive exports that are far from being climate neutral. We expect the newly established European Commission to elevate sustainability on the political agenda, and urgently outline measures in the interest of climate justice. This strategy should not discourage, but encourage, serious regulation of finance, reforms of the monetary union, and the development of an innovation-based industrial policy.

As the leading progressive think tank in Europe, FEPS has been mobilising resources as well as public attention in recent years, in favour of research and debates that promote sustainability. We will also do our utmost for the outcomes of the September 2019 UN summit to be disseminated and brought closer to various European regions. Ensuring that European policy finds the way to climate justice and that the necessary transformation is sustainable remains a most important task for us.