



## European Commission - Speech [Check Against Delivery]



### **Speech by President von der Leyen at the closing session of the EU Green Week 2020**

Brussels, 22 October 2020

Dear Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP),

Dear Inger,

Dear Commissioners,

Dear Jutta and Virginijus,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

Congratulations to the organisers of the 2020 European Green Week for a very successful edition.

You have built a fantastic program. I would like to thank everyone who has been involved. It makes the closing of this year's Green Week the opening of a new chapter.

This European week takes place as we are paving the way to Kunming. We need and we want a successful outcome of the global biodiversity negotiations.

Until not so long ago, biodiversity loss was discussed by a minority of devoted conservationists. Today, we all understand it is a very serious subject for everyone: Young people and students have understood: biodiversity is at the heart of their future and the future of our planet. The most active ones are mobilising and rallying the other generations.

Active are mayors and local politicians, because biodiversity concerns every village and every city. The most active ones are already hiring biodiversity officers. They want to make sure that we have green urban spaces, from parks and gardens to green roofs and urban farms. This provides benefits for people and a refuge for nature.

Active are also Farmers and producers, because biodiversity affects every step, from our fields to our food. And the most advanced ones have already embraced it. They deploy precision agriculture, organic farming, or low-intensive permanent grasslands. By doing so, they help us bring nature back and preserve biodiversity.

Active are also Businesspeople and leaders, because biodiversity has a huge potential in terms of jobs and opportunities for our economy and the society as a whole. The most active ones have already invested time, energy and money in this promising field. They know, that restoration can lead to a significant creation of employment in sectors, such as construction and landscaping work. And natural capital investment, including restoration of carbon-rich habitats and climate-friendly agriculture, is among the five most important fiscal recovery policies.

They have understood that there is no choice between nature on the one hand and the economy on the other. What is good for nature is good for the economy.

Yes, we are living a special moment. And your work and engagement is central to that.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Climate change and biodiversity loss are happening before our eyes. They amplify each other. The need to act has never been clearer. This is what is driving me as President of the European Commission. That is why we presented the European Green Deal, last December, after just 11 days in office.

The European Green Deal is our vision and roadmap for making Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. In March, we proposed the first ever climate law.

Then came the pandemic. Now, should we stop our course because of the pandemic? Of course not. To the contrary.

This is why we also presented our 'EU biodiversity strategy for 2030' in May. It will scale up our work on this.

Let me take as an example: protection of nature. If we act decisively, we can make a difference. The Iberian lynx for example: thanks to a series of projects supported by EU LIFE, one of the most threatened animal in Europe is recovering. There were only 100 Iberian lynx alive 20 years ago. Today we have more than 600 of them.

When we give a chance to nature, see what positive return we get.

Let me take another example with nature restoration. By restoring floodplains, peatlands, and other carbon-rich habitats, we can increase our carbon sinks as well as bring back biodiversity. There is a clear triple win at stake here: Win for the climate, win for biodiversity, and win for jobs.

For example, the restoration of damaged coastal habitats would create jobs in coastal safety, marine and terrestrial ecology, hydrology, geochemistry, engineering, governance and maintenance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, we are calling on all to join our action to halt biodiversity loss.

You are numerous today, coming from all parts of Europe, public and private sectors, small villages and big cities, start-ups, SMEs and multinationals.

And there are more and more allies in the world: Development and humanitarian organisations; companies and cities; Youth and faith organisations; and of course all countries and regions around the world who want to address biodiversity loss.

It is at events like this Green Week that one feels the energy. That one gets the resolve to transform our economy and society.

We are teaming up. We are providing leadership to help us agree on a new Global Biodiversity Framework in Kunming next year.

Global rules that are clear, measurable that allow us, to hold each other accountable.

Let us act, each of us, with no delay.

You can count on my commitment.

Thank you.