

# EU leaders seek last-minute climate deal

October 23 2014, by Lachlan Carmichael

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European Union leaders came under pressure to strike a deal aimed at bolstering Brussels as a trailblazer in fighting global climate change as negotiations went down to the wire

European Union leaders came under pressure Thursday to strike a deal aimed at bolstering Brussels as a trailblazer in fighting global climate change as negotiations went down to the wire.

The two-day summit in Brussels will focus on an ambitious package of climate change targets for 2030 but also tackle the Ebola crisis, economic stagnation, concern over Ukraine and tension in Cyprus over

Turkey.

But just hours before the leaders of the 28 nations were due in Brussels, a draft of the conclusions seen by AFP contained none of the key benchmarks they are meant to agree on, with discord mainly over the cost of meeting the targets.

Outgoing European Council President Herman Van Rompuy said however he was "hopeful that we will be able to reach this final deal tonight".

"It is a crucial deal for many reasons—for the [global climate](#), for EU citizens, for the leading role the EU plays in global climate efforts," Van Rompuy said.

The summit organisers faced an early challenge from a demonstration by Belgian police, who let off firecrackers in protest at retirement reforms and confronted officers guarding the venue, AFP reporters saw.

The EU wants to have an agreement on the climate change targets, among the world's toughest, in place ahead of a summit in Paris in 2015 at which a new UN-backed global treaty on [climate change](#) is to be agreed.

## **Talks go to the wire**

But deep divisions remain over the cost of the targets, especially from coal-reliant Poland, while Britain, which is looking to nuclear power and shale gas for the future, was pushing for more flexibility, EU sources said.



A woman and child wear masks on a polluted day in Beijing on October 20, 2014

Plans to cut greenhouse gases by 40 percent over 1990 levels and make renewable energy such as solar and wind power account for 27 percent of energy use seemed to have broad agreement, sources said.

The energy efficiency targets are a headache, however, with Britain in particular pushing for the figure to be reduced to 27 percent from the 30 percent recommended by the European Commission, sources said.

Meanwhile, countries like Spain and Portugal are at odds with France over their desire to build more cross-border cables to export surplus electricity produced by wind power.

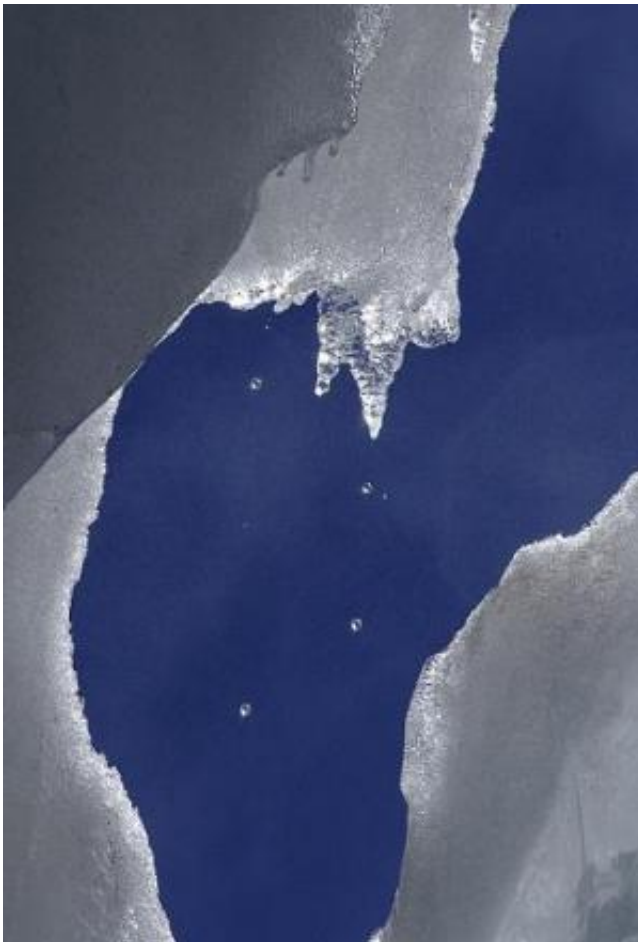
Talks were going down to the wire as the "sherpas" who steer the leaders met from 2:00 pm (1200 GMT) to iron out last-minute differences, EU

sources said.

Jose Manuel Barroso, the outgoing head of the EU executive the European Commission, said he was "confident" the leaders would agree to the emissions target of 40 percent, but did not mention the other benchmarks.

The climate debate comes against a backdrop of energy security worries in the EU, which is at odds with its biggest gas supplier Russia over the crisis in Ukraine.

## **Tackling Ebola**



A close up of the Sindipumba Glaciar, on the north side of Cotopaxi volcano in Ecuador, on January 3, 2004

Agreement is likely to be simpler on action to tackle the Ebola outbreak in west Africa, which has claimed nearly 4,900 lives, and prevent it from becoming a global threat, although money will again be an issue.

EU member states and the European Commission have already pledged nearly 600 million euros (\$750 million) to fight Ebola and are expected to announce an Ebola "czar" at the summit.

British Prime Minister David Cameron is expected to call on fellow EU leaders to boost that amount to one billion euros, British government sources said.

The leaders will also discuss the Ukraine crisis although any progress is unlikely as an EU review on the ceasefire between Kiev and pro-Moscow rebels is not due until next Tuesday.

The heads of state and government will also search for ways on Friday to foster economic growth and jobs amid fears of a triple-dip recession.

Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades was briefly hospitalised with high blood pressure in Brussels and asked Greece's premier to stand in for him at the summit.

The EU leaders are to call on Turkey to respect Cyprus's sovereign rights and express "serious concern" after Nicosia slammed Ankara for sending an survey vessel into an area where Cyprus is exploring for oil and gas, according to the draft statement.

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