

Merkel boosts EU push for 2050 net zero emissions target

June 20 2019, by Lachlan Carmichael



After climate change became a central issue in May's EU elections, the bloc has moved to set a more ambitious emissions target

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Thursday endorsed for the first time a European Union target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by

2050, putting pressure on reluctant coal-dependent eastern European countries.

Merkel made the remarks as she arrived for an EU summit which will, among other topics, discuss "climate neutrality" by mid-century under growing public and political demands to step up the fight against [climate change](#).

"We want to commit ourselves to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. I at least can explicitly support this goal for Germany," Merkel told reporters in Brussels.

NGOs and EU officials have for days been pointing to a shift in the position of Germany, the bloc's most powerful economy and the biggest polluter, but were waiting for Merkel to sign off on it.

"I'm very happy that we are seeing growing momentum to the goal of climate neutrality by 2050," French President Emmanuel Macron told reporters.

As president of the country that brokered the 2015 Paris climate agreement, Macron has pushed most fervently for the goal.

The leaders then entered talks on a finely-nuanced summit resolution that nonetheless mentions for the first time having the 28-nation bloc commit to no more carbon emissions than it absorbs by 2050.

The leaders will urge the EU "to advance work on the conditions, the incentives and the enabling framework to be put in place, in order to determine how to ensure a transition to a climate-neutral EU by 2050," according to a draft obtained by AFP.

The aim must also "preserve European competitiveness, be just and

socially balanced, take account of member states' national circumstances and respect their right to decide on their own energy mix."

'Climate emergency'

Countries in central and eastern Europe that depend heavily on coal-fired plants have expressed concerns how they will be able to finance the shift to [green energy](#), EU sources said.

The draft appeal is directed at both the members and the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, which is due to be reconstituted following elections in May and begin a new term in November.

"Strategically it is the most important issue for the next five-year commission," an EU diplomat told journalists before a summit to debate appointments for the new commission chief and other top jobs.

The growing stress on climate action comes after Green parties made substantial gains in May's European Parliament elections.

Spurred by a wave of student strikes, voters in many countries highlighted climate concerns and the parliament's main political blocs for the first time adopted [climate action](#) as a rallying cry.

Maintaining the pressure, Greenpeace said it projected onto the Commission's headquarters on Wednesday night a large animation of the Earth as a bomb with a lit fuse.

"Climate emergency. Time's running out. EU act now," the projection said, according to photos and video provided by Greenpeace.

Many scientists and activists say 2050 is too late to become "[climate neutral](#)," and want the date moved forward to 2040.

Warnings have multiplied since 2015 when 195 countries meeting in Paris sealed a landmark agreement to keep temperature rises well below two degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) warned in October that warming is on track towards a catastrophic 3C or 4C rise, and avoiding global chaos will require a major transformation.

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