

To: EU 27 Heads of State, Presidents, Chancellors, Prime Ministers, Leaders
To: Antonia Costa, President of the European Council
To: Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission
Cc: Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives at the Member State Delegations to the EU
Cc Executive Vice-Presidents Ms Teresa Ribera and Stephane Séjourné
Cc Commissioners Wopke Hoekstra and Jessika Roswall

Re: European Council meeting, 26-27 June 2025

Brussels, 23 June 2025

Dear Heads of State, Presidents, Chancellors, Prime Ministers, Leaders,

On behalf of the European Environmental Bureau (representing 195 civil society organisations across all of the EU, with a combined membership of 30 million Europeans), I am writing to you to share our views on many of the issues on the agenda of the European Council of 26 and 27 June 2025, and stress our deep concern, despite the visible and profound consequences of the triple climate-nature-pollution crisis on our societies, economy and competitiveness, that this is not at all reflected in your agenda.

The World Economic Forum's [The Global Risks Report 2025](#), ranks 'extreme weather events', 'biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse', 'critical change to Earth systems', and 'natural resource shortages' as the top 4 global risks in the next ten years, with 'pollution' also one of the top 10. For the next two years, the 'risk of extreme weather events' is in second place after 'misinformation and disinformation', recognised as the top risk, driving multiple crises. These risks are of deep relevance to many of your agenda points below, hence our letter to you.

We live in dangerous times, marked by an increasing number of conflicts and the chaotic and rapid emergence of a New World Order. It is impossible to predict the outcomes, as new developments emerge every day. Yet one thing is clear: we risk a terrifying future of escalating deadly conflict, and even if that is avoided, we still face looming threats of economic turmoil and new antagonistic geopolitical blocs, that each represent key decisions for the EU and for Europeans. And while these new realities are unfolding, the triple planetary crisis of climate collapse, biodiversity loss and pollution is deepening. Europe faces historical choices.

Ukraine

Russia's illegal aggression against Ukraine continues its destruction, bloodshed and attempts to undermine a sovereign nation and its people – a people Europe must continue to stand firmly behind. Intelligence services warn that a [Russian attack on EU soil could happen within five years](#). The war and the US's withdrawal of support for Ukraine and changing attitude towards the EU, are bringing Europe closer together, even as internal and external forces work to undermine it, and we need to stand together in finding solutions for justice and peace.

Europe is stepping up to guarantee Ukraine's security, while political priorities and narratives are shifting to defence, to ReArm Europe, and the EU's Readiness 2030 plan. However, current discussions are based on a narrow vision of security limited to rearmament, rather than a vision of human security focused on ensuring peace, democracy, strong institutions and good governance, food and water security, decreased climate risks and energy and material independence. At the same time, European

money keeps flowing into the Kremlin's war coffers as [EU countries still spend more on Russian fossil fuels than on supporting Ukraine](#). This is strategically unsound and dangerously short-sighted. Europe must urgently shift to fossil fuel independence.

There is also evidence that Russia has been financing disinformation *as part of a "long-term cognitive war"* to sow division, and help undermine the European Green Deal, given that it is clearly in Russia's interest that the EU does not step away from fossil fuels. Russia, [a study by Poland's military counterintelligence service](#), has estimated, [spent \\$2-4 billion a year on climate disinformation](#) and propaganda in Poland. Hence the priority given by the Polish EU Presidency to this issue, with urgent discussions at the informal meeting of environmental ministers in Warsaw on 28-29 April. If billions are being spent to influence one country alone on climate, what are the sums for Europe as a whole across issues? And the influence?

We call upon the European Council to:

- **Recognise that the European Green Deal (EGD) directly supports energy independence from hostile powers like Russia** – through policies that support renewable energy, energy efficiency, and energy sufficiency roll out, supported by investments in a smarter, stronger and more interconnected and resilient European electricity grid.
- **Stop Russian gas imports, including through indirect imports**, and work with partners globally, to dry up Russia's income on fossil fuels.
- **Counter the intention of Russian disinformation** that seeks to scale back climate and environmental spending and weaken or undo the European Green Deal (EGD) to keep the EU's dependency on Russian imports and **commit publicly to the EGD and fossil fuel independence**.
- **Recognise that weakening the EGD would only support the Kremlin's ambitions** and give a win to the Kremlin's interference in EU affairs.

Middle East

Globally, the number of armed conflicts has doubled in the last five years. In 2024 alone, at least [233,000 people were killed](#) in armed conflicts, with Ukraine, Gaza and the West Bank reporting the highest numbers of victims. Global military spending reached a new peak of just over \$2.7 trillion, according to SIPRI — marking the steepest rise since the end of the Cold War.

There is ever-growing evidence of blatant disrespect of fundamental principles and rules of international humanitarian and human rights law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity. [Amnesty International](#), and many others closely monitoring the situation, have established that Israel's regime is committing genocide in Gaza, and it is doing so under the eyes of Europe watching. This is unacceptable, and the EU must do all it can to avoid a worsening humanitarian disaster and further violations of international law.

As a network of citizens organisation working on a sustainable future, democracy, peace and justice, the EEB membership noted in the Emergency Resolution of our General Assembly (May 2025): *"The EEB expresses its solidarity with humankind the world over. We call on all States to increase their humanitarian*

aid in the face of famine, threat of famine, disease and suffering consequent on natural and man-made disasters and conflicts.

In particular, we express our serious concern at the significant reduction and termination of major international aid programmes and funding by certain Countries whose role has been of profound importance.

We condemn the blocking of humanitarian aid, either deliberately or in passive complicity when failing to observe the obligations of third States in respect of breaches of international law.

We call urgently on all States to take all diplomatic and economic measures necessary to act to ensure the immediate safe passage of humanitarian aid, including to Gaza."

In addition, Article 2 of the Association Agreement between Israel and the EU clearly defines respect for human rights and democratic principles as an "essential element" of the EU-Israel relationship. According to Article 79, failure to comply allows the EU to take "appropriate measures," including suspension.

On 20 May 2025, the High Representative announced a formal review of Israel's compliance with Article 2, citing the blockade of humanitarian aid and escalating atrocities in Gaza. This review was backed by at least 17 Member States, with the Netherlands withholding its approval for any extension of the EU-Israel Action Plan pending its outcome.

The suspension will be discussed at the upcoming EU Foreign Affairs Council on 24 June 2025, where the European Commission and High Representative are expected to present the results of their review of Israel's compliance with Article 2 of the Agreement. [Early indications](#) suggest a likely conclusion of non-compliance. **We call on Member States to support the suspension of the Association Agreement with clear demands for a cease fire in Gaza, to allow for independent humanitarian actors to support the population, and to agree to collaborate on a peace plan for the region.**

The EU has mechanisms to respond to human rights violations, but these tools are only meaningful if applied equally and consistently. Continued cooperation with Israel under the current circumstances would undermine the EU's legal framework for external action, expose institutions and partners to accusations of complicity to genocide and war crimes, and further weaken the EU's credibility on justice, human rights, democracy, and environmental responsibility.

As Kaja Kallas, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, said in the [debate in the European Parliament on the 18th of June](#), "Israel has the right to self-defense, but what we see in practice from Israel goes beyond self-defense" and "blocking food and medicine for Palestinians trapped in Gaza does not protect Israel." "It undermines decades of humanitarian principles."

European defence and security

The illegal Russian aggression in Ukraine, the change of US stance and the looming threat of Russian aggression on the EU itself are driving a fundamental shift in the EU's thinking on security, sovereignty, and even [traditional](#) red lines such as the debt ceilings in Germany. This evolving security narrative, however, carries real risks. As attention and funds flow toward rearming Europe, pressure is growing to scale back climate and environmental spending. Calls to weaken or undo the European Green Deal (EGD) have intensified. Yet this is a dangerous mistake: the Green Deal is essential for Europe's security

and for achieving Readiness 2030. Accelerating decarbonisation is not just a climate imperative; it directly supports energy independence from hostile powers like Russia.

The energy transition should also lead to saving Europe huge amounts otherwise spent on fossil fuel imports and bring prices down. Furthermore, fast-tracking circular economy measures will reduce dependence on imported materials, weaken others' ability to weaponise fuel, materials and supply chains, and make supply chains more resilient. The same goes for sustainable food and farming: cutting reliance on Russian fertilisers and improving local, sustainable food systems and healthy diets strengthens Europe's security, notably by decreasing the need for imports of proteins for animal feed. Delivering the European Green Deal is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Undermining it will weaken, not strengthen, Europe's security.

Security is understandably an important political focus. But security is much more than military security. It includes protecting our societies from misinformation and disinformation –[identified as the top security risk in the next two years](#). It is also about safeguarding human security: shielding citizens from climate impacts, pollution, harmful chemicals, and health crises. It means ensuring access to healthy and sustainable food, reducing our protein dependency for our livestock sector, healthcare, preserving mental and physical health through nature access, and embracing the one-health approach that connects the wellbeing of people, animals, and the planet.

The cascading crises that will be unleashed through a runaway greenhouse effect, ecosystem collapse, and uncontrolled pollution and harmful chemicals will far outweigh the security challenges leaders are struggling with today. As Germany's previous Foreign Minister rightly said, "[The climate crisis is the greatest security threat of our time.](#)"

We call upon the European Council to:

- Embrace a security narrative that takes all threats into account and **recognise that the Green Deal is not an obstacle to security, but a foundation**. The current temptation to embrace "pragmatism" or "flexibility" that would weaken the proposed 90% greenhouse gas emissions reduction target by 2040 must be firmly resisted.
- **Recognise that the climate crisis is a fundamental security crisis for Europe**, as are the nature and pollution crisis and linked concerns of water security, which is an issue both of quantity and quality of water availability. And ensure reflections of the triple climate-nature-pollution crises in security discussions.
- **Commit to tackling disinformation**, providing good public information on the benefits of regulation and costs of inaction (see annex), and promote evidence-based decision making. **Do not undermine the Green Claims legislation** as this is essential for the public to be able to make informed choices and trust products and the claims associated. Withdrawing this legislation would only add "missing information" to the already more than problematic disinformation and misinformation. It would also undermine trust in the EU and in business. It would be pyrrhic victory for some businesses and a short term one at best.

EU in the world

The world is at a turning point of history. The EU is now the only global bloc which can present a credible green transition agenda of hope and work with partners across the globe. The EU should stand up for

the rule of law, for multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and global governance, the fight on mis- and disinformation, support civil society, strong institutions and democracy, engage in partnerships in solidarity with other countries and embrace our own global responsibilities.

The current chaos can make and dictate the EU's future, or the EU can decide to make history and lead with hope and vision.

We are not being alarmist; we (as many others) are sounding the alarm on Europe's future and wider global chaos and asking the EU to take a clear stance and become a beacon of hope in a chaotic, conflict-ridden world, and work with partners to resist the forces pushing dystopia.

There is no future in the EU becoming another copy of the US, China or Russia by rolling back the Green Deal and investing in fossil fuels. The choice for Europe – of whether to resist the influence of other geopolitical power-blocs, and choose to become the global bloc championing a credible green transition and provide an agenda of hope, will shape the history of humanity: we can blink and face a dystopian future, or build a prosperous, healthy society based on a green, climate neutral, and innovative economy open to like-minded partners.

In addition, it should be underlined that **attacks on civil society seen since October 2024 are part of a wider playbook to weaken critical voices in the EU**, through this to facilitate the roll back of the European Green Deal and progressive environmental and social protections and first steps towards also weakening institutions, free press, judiciary and the European Project itself, and play into the hands not only of Russia but also of the current US administration who have vocally and explicitly stated their change of heart with respect to the EU.

We call upon the European Council to:

- Step up to the need and opportunity of history and champion a needed **green and social transition to a one planet economy and embark on high levels of global diplomacy to develop partnerships on sustainable solutions** for a common, progressive future that gives citizens hope, and strengthens EU's diplomatic relationships across the globe.
- Keep investing in the **Multilateral Governance processes and the international rule of law** – this is essential in these times of a changing world order.
- A multipolar world is clearly emerging, and within this, **the EU should invest in resilient relationships with countries of common values, independent of their size.** This is essential for successful global governance of common challenges on our common home.
- **Recognise the playbook behind the attacks on civil society and commit to a strong and engaged civil society** that helps strengthen the operation and resilience of EU democracy and protect European values and the European Project itself. Ensure that civil society is duly defended and supported in the upcoming **Democracy Shield and Civil Society Strategy**.

Competitiveness

Before the recent geopolitical upheavals and intensifying trade wars, the dominant narrative in the EU centred on competitiveness. But today, that concept is being redefined. Under the new US administration, competitiveness is being pursued through tearing up of environmental and social protections, backtracking from global climate commitments, slashing support for renewable energies,

and stepping towards becoming an aggressive petrostate. Key institutions are being weakened, from the civil service to the judiciary, while international cooperation is being eroded, and education's independence under attack. Meanwhile, tariffs are being weaponised to fund tax cuts and shield domestic industries from global competition.

This is a destructive model — ethically, financially, and diplomatically. It is not one that Europe can afford to follow, and it flies in the face of common sense. And quite simply, our values and what kind of civilisation we want to be. Undermining the rule of law, pushing for deregulation, and weakening legal frameworks will only deepen environmental and health degradation, increase human suffering, and, if the rule of law can't be trusted, lead to a breakdown of confidence in doing business in the EU. Where is predictability and legal certainty in an unravelling legal framework? Europe risks becoming a far less attractive place to invest or innovate and indeed live.

We call upon the European Council to:

- **Choose a European model of a clear and predictable progressive regulatory environment** giving a direction of travel, a certainty that investment in clean technologies and techniques and other measures will be rewarded by a conducive regulatory environment.
- **Resist the arguments mirroring those in the US of the need for deregulation.** This will not help long-term EU competitiveness but rather undermine it if the EU loses its reputation as a supplier of safe, clean, and reliable products.
- **Complement this by a Clean Competitiveness Fund within the MFF** and environmental and social investments and protections to have a whole of society advance. Keep commitment for the Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle which proved useful in the National Recovery and Resilience Plans to help build back better after Covid.
- **Step up social measures and investments** to ensure that all of society is part of the wider ecological transition necessary for new and future generation and inter-generational justice. All parts of society have to be able to have agency in and benefit from the transition. This would also help avoid a backlash against a too narrow corporate competitiveness narrative, that cannot work if workers and citizens are not taken on board.
- **Engage in simplification using an evidence-based approach** - Simplification should be aiming at smart implementation, not unravelling social and environmental protections, that just undermine public trust and wellbeing.

We hope that the above insights and recommendations help you in your Council deliberations and decisions and wider responsibilities. We also like to share with you civil society's vision for the period to 2030: [**The European Pact for the Future: a Green and Social Deal for a One-Planet economy**](#), signed by over 340 organisations and 1100 individuals, our vision a sustainable and resilient Europe.

We remain available to discuss with you these practical visions and look forward to working together to create an agenda of hope and progress.

Yours sincerely,

European Environmental Bureau

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Annex 1:

The Cost of Inaction: Why Environmental Standards Are Key to EU Competitiveness

There are immense costs of inaction in addressing the climate, pollution, and biodiversity crises—costs that our economy and society cannot bear much longer. These challenges must be at the heart of any discussion on the EU's future competitiveness.

Climate:

The [World Economic Forum](#) estimates that for every \$1 invested in climate adaptation today, we can avoid \$2–\$10 in future costs.

Biodiversity, Water, Air, and Soil:

The European Environment Agency (EEA) reports that the loss of ecosystem services could cost the EU hundreds of billions of euros annually. Soil degradation alone costs Europe at least [€97 billion per year](#), with the costs of inaction outweighing action by a factor of six. These costs primarily burden [farmers and society at large](#).

The remediation of contaminated soil with PFAS is even more costly, potentially exceeding €2 trillion across Europe. Water purification alone is estimated at [€238 billion](#) within the EU. Overall, removing PFAS from the environment at current emission rates could surpass [10% of global GDP](#)—excluding damages to animals or property values.

Air Pollution:

Between 2012 and 2021, industrial air pollution from the EU's largest industries cost an estimated €2.7–4.3 trillion. Researchers highlight that the only viable mitigation measures include stringent pollution controls, phasing out carbon-intensive fuels, and electrification.

Health:

The Nordic Council of Ministers estimates that direct healthcare costs from PFAS exposure in Europe are [€52–84 billion](#) annually. It would cost around [€100 billion every year](#) to remove short-chain and ultrashort-chain PFAS, even partially, from the environment and to destroy them. That is more than two trillion over 20 years. The societal costs of PFAS have been estimated at [\\$17.5 trillion \(about \\$54,000 per person in the US\)](#) annually, while manufacturers make only \$4 billion (about \$12 per person in the US) in profits. In other words, while the average market price of PFAS is about €19 for each kilogram, the price spikes to about €18,734 for each kilogram when societal costs are factored in. The European Commission has estimated that the health benefits of banning the most harmful chemicals in everyday products outweigh industry costs by a factor of ten.

These figures are a warning that competitiveness on the wrong products can lead to far far larger societal losses. *Acting now is the only wise investment for the future.*

[1] [A business perspective: Strong Environmental Standards foster long term competitiveness](#)

[2] [Joint CSO and business demand A “Clean” Industrial Deal that works for the planet and its people](#)

[3] [European Pact for the Future + Action Plan + Industrial Blueprint](#)

[4] [Briefing note on smart implementation](#)

[5] [Joint CSOs \(+180\) statement urging the incoming European Commission to prioritise effective implementation of climate and environmental laws](#)