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Europe must lead on the climate crisis. The European Green Deal shows how.

Ursula von der Leyen, *The Guardian*, 11th December 2019

Humanity faces an existential threat. Forests burn from America to Australia. Deserts are advancing across Africa and Asia. Rising sea levels threaten our European cities as well as Pacific islands. Mankind has seen such phenomena before, but never at this speed.

Science tells us that we can still stop this epidemic, but we are running out of time. The new European commission is wasting no time, with the European Green Deal.

Our goal is to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, slowing down global heating and mitigating its effects. This is a task for our generation and the next, but change must begin right now – and we know we can do it.

The European Green Deal is Europe's new growth strategy. It will cut emissions while also creating jobs and improving our quality of life. It is the green thread that will run through all our policies – from transport to taxation, food to farming, industry to infrastructure. We want to invest in clean energy and extend emissions trading, but we will also boost the circular economy and preserve biodiversity.

The European Green Deal is not just a necessity: it will be a driver of new economic opportunities. Many European firms are already going green, cutting their carbon footprint and discovering clean technologies. They understand that there are planetary limitations and European companies of all sizes understand that everyone has to take care of our common home. They also know that if they discover the sustainable solutions of tomorrow, this will give them an advantage.

Across Europe, people young and old are not only asking for climate action, they are already changing their lifestyle: think of the commuters who use bikes or public transport, parents who choose reusable nappies, companies that renounce single-use plastics and bring sustainable alternatives to the market. Many of us are part of this global movement. Climate action protests have seen thousands take to the streets around Britain.

Nine European citizens out of 10 ask for decisive climate action. Our children rely on us. Europeans want the EU to act at home and lead abroad. People around the world are meeting in Madrid for the UN conference on climate, to discuss collective action against global heating. The European Green Deal is our response. It is a deal by Europe, for Europe, and a contribution to a better world. Every European can be part of the change.

• *Ursula von der Leyen is president of the European commission*