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Input to the EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029

Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe is Europe's leading NGO coalition fighting dangerous climate change. With over 200 member organisations active in more than 40 European countries, representing over 1,700 NGOs and more than 40 million citizens, CAN Europe promotes sustainable climate, energy and development policies throughout Europe.

The „new strategic agenda 2024-2029' must set out the priority areas that will steer the work of the European Council and provide guidance for the work programmes of other EU institutions which manage and accelerate the EU's transition, building on the European Green Deal, towards a **fossil-free, socially just, and climate-neutral union**.

The leaked draft of the Strategic Agenda from April 2024 was a missed opportunity and generated great concerns over its lack of clarity and determination to build on the EU's achievements, mainly the European Green Deal, and accelerate action in light of the multiple interlinked crises that the continent and the world overall is facing. While the leaked draft version from 12 June 2024 reflects some improvements in this regard, it still falls short to give the clear direction for a rapid **transition to a fossil-free, socially just and climate neutral Europe**. That's why we urge EU decision makers to reflect the following priorities in the Strategic Agenda¹ and its future implementation.

A free and democratic Europe

Upholding European values within the Union

Policies for the EU's people can only succeed if the people themselves are able to actively participate within a strong democracy, and it is overdue to counter trends of shrinking civic space. Therefore it will be critical to

- **strengthen, protect, resource and support civil society and youth organisations**, independent science and research and media across Europe.
- **Ensure meaningful youth participation** in formal policy processes and enable young people to design their own future through supporting youth-led initiatives

¹ Organised under the partially amended headings and sub-headings of the leaked draft from 12 June

- **Strengthen the role of local authorities, citizens and community-led grassroots initiatives in EU decision-making processes** and resource them adequately as they are at the forefront of the action against climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.
- **Facilitate litigation to hold accountable governments, business and financial institutions** for their ongoing investments in fossil fuels and carbon intensive industries and the related human rights effects that such investments can provoke
- **Guarantee current and future generations' fundamental rights to a healthy environment**, to enjoy a life with dignity and environmental protection.
- **Protect and expand civic spaces at EU, national and local levels** through effective, transparent and timely public participation in policy-making, implementation and expansion of citizens' assemblies and other innovative forms of civic participation at all levels, firm action against threats or breaches of the rule of law, and strengthening citizens' rights to access to justice and improve compliance with environmental and climate obligations at all.

A Strong and Secure Europe

Ensuring a coherent and influential external action

- **Ensure the EU leads by example for climate justice internationally**, delivering on its obligations to the Global, honouring commitments to providing and increasing new and additional, in particular grants-based international climate finance in line with its fair share.
- find **new revenues from equitable global, EU and national taxes and levies** which redistribute wealth and make big polluters pay for climate damages.
- **promote significant reform of the IMF and World Bank, debt cancellation, and a UN Tax Convention**, to give countries the fiscal space they need for climate and development action.
- endorse an **inclusive and feminist climate policy** as a cornerstone of EU external action and diplomacy.
- Make sure **EU trade policy is supporting rather than contradicting climate and development objectives** with trade, financing and investments built around development objectives rather than extraction of raw materials.

A prosperous and competitive, fossil-free, socially just, and climate-neutral Europe

Bolstering our competitiveness

- **Advance the just transformation and make the European Green Deal the engine for a strong EU green industrial strategy creating new jobs** in climate-friendly and circular-economy sectors; including through the European Commission issuing targets and recommendations for qualification and employment;
- **Education and training should be in line with a green EU industrial strategy and consistently geared towards climate-friendly employment**, for example through retraining from automotive to recharging infrastructure, from the aviation to the rail industry, training programmes for the refurbishment of residential buildings, installation of heat pumps and solar panels or employment in the circular economy.
- **Ensure a sustainable and fair natural resources management within and beyond the EU**, effectively tackling over-production and over-consumption, and bring back Europe's resource consumption within planetary boundaries and setting ambitious and binding targets to reduce the EU's material footprint and achieve a fully circular economy.
- Scale up action to deal with the climate emergency, including by **upward revisions of the 2025-2030 ambition** of the EU climate and energy legislative framework in order to enable the EU to move substantially beyond its current climate targets and achieve at least -65% gross (-76% net) emission reductions by 2030; bringing forward the **EU's climate neutrality target and commit to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 at the latest**, with at least 92% gross emission cuts
- Reform the **EU public debt and deficit rules** and **establish a new EU fund for climate and just transformation** to enable the needed investments in the just and green transition.
- **Revise the EU taxonomy** to exclude nuclear and gas from green labelling, and regulate private finance to maximise its support to the green transition
- Ensure **due diligence for social, environmental and human rights impacts** in critical mineral supply chains, particularly in the Global South.

Making a success of the green and digital transitions

- **Accelerating the transition to a Fossil-Free, 100% renewable based energy system** will be essential to achieve climate neutrality and provides the potential for multiple socio-economic benefits, if policies guide the economic transformation towards a more equitable, people-centred and climate-friendly energy system.
- **Adjust its energy legislation in order to speed up the deployment of sustainable renewable energy**, and necessary infrastructure, while avoiding new hydropower plants and sources of

bioenergy that increase emissions compared to fossil fuels, and ensure renewables provide a share of at least 50% of the EU's energy mix by 2030, and 100% by 2040.

- **Adopt binding phase-out dates and trajectories** to seal the end of the use of coal (by 2030 at the latest), fossil gas (by 2035 at the latest) and fossil oil (by 2040 at the latest).
- **Put an immediate end to fossil fuel subsidies** in a socially just manner and stop fossil infrastructure expansion, including for liquefied gas. Support for hydrogen should be targeted at hard to electrify sectors only and be produced from additional renewable energy sources.
- Ensure the EU endorses and supports an **international Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty**.
- **Fully tap into Europe's energy savings potential and adopt EU-wide and national targets to cut energy consumption in half by 2040** and sufficiency measures in all sectors of the economy and mobilise investments at all levels to ensure at least 20% energy savings by 2030.
- **Enable a tripling of the renovation rate and a large-scale roll-out of deep renovation for all occupants**, a transport modal shift from inefficient aviation to rail and light efficient vehicles, more electric vehicles and the use of more efficient appliances.
- The EU should exclude any possibility of using EU funds for new fossil fuel investments and infrastructure projects in Europe and internationally which increase fossil fuel use.
- **accelerate measures to protect, restore and enhance Europe's natural carbon sinks**, including through the implementation of the Nature Restoration Law and appropriate finance
- **Reform the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** towards a system where subsidies are strictly linked to sustainable agricultural practices, accelerating an agroecological transition away from industrial agriculture with reduced industrial livestock farming.
- **Adopt a binding European law on planned, ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change**, including in support of agro-ecological practices to reduce water consumption and soil degradation in the agricultural sector, greening cities, eliminating concrete surfaces to combat heat islands, and other adaptation measures, which can help to reduce social inequalities.

Advancing together

- **Support local communities of regions dependent on coal and carbon intensive industries** in decline with funds, tools and know-how so they can become prosperous
- **Increase social resilience and dedicated funds for enhancing social cohesion and fighting energy poverty**, such as the Social Climate Fund, public goods and services for all through policies that enhance the fair redistribution of wealth and resources, sustainability, protection of biodiversity, gender responsiveness, racial equity and societal wellbeing.