

Statement by the President of Latvia, Egils Levits, at the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) World Leaders Summit in Glasgow

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Foreign policy

Egils Levits



Mr President,

distinguished delegates!

Let me begin by thanking the UK and Prime Minister Boris Johnson for leadership as our host and co-president of COP26.

It has been six years since we all took up commitments in Paris. We know we are not on track to meet them.

There is no time to lose. Keeping the 1.5° C target within reach is a must. It is the minimum that COP26 should deliver.

My country, Latvia, is no exception in experiencing the increasing effects of climate change. With almost 500km of coastline, we are keenly aware of coastal erosion risks. Extreme climate-related incidents in Europe are becoming more common.

Latvia contributes only 0.02 % of world greenhouse gas emissions, yet we will uphold our commitments in this field – at the national level, within the EU and in the UN framework.

Mitigation efforts are urgently needed. This is the common task of national governments, international organisations, public and private sectors, our societies. Each individual is a crucial stakeholder.

We must persuade our national constituencies that “going green” can bring greater prosperity and security. A new mindset is required. Changes in our behaviour and a transition to a green economy are in the long-term interest of humankind.

All too often support for climate-friendly policies is in words only. To a certain extent I observe this in my country, too. We like to believe we are naturally ‘green-minded’. True, a high percentage of Latvia’s energy mix comes from renewables. More than half

of our land is covered by forest. Our greenhouse gas emissions per capita have decreased by more than a third since 1990. Yet I often meet resistance to pro-active steps that would decrease our reliance on fossil fuels. There is still much to be done, especially in the fields of energy, transport and agriculture.

While we work towards limiting climate change, adaptation is also essential.

Necessary changes may create social challenges. Certain individuals, groups and nations will in the short and medium term suffer losses. The concerns of those who mistrust and refuse to accept the climate agenda must be answered.

In order to promote reform, it is necessary to create mechanisms which would at least partially off-set their losses. Crucially, such mechanisms need to be backed by adequate resources.

Greater interaction between science and business is also urgently needed. Scaling up of investments in green technologies is key to sustainable growth.

A robust framework of rules to ensure environmental integrity of the system and promote ambition must be an outcome of this COP26. This includes rules on transparency, as well as on markets.

We must also be able to move beyond pledges and tackle the fine print: how will the transition work in practice? Who is going to pay for it? Who is going to carry the heaviest burden?

Mr President,

As you have rightly said, we have no choice but to deliver.

The call to action is loud and clear, especially from our youth. For them climate change is an existential threat. They are right to demand our leadership. I, as President of Latvia, will do my part.

Thank you!



President of Latvia will urge other countries to take firm action against climate change during the UN Glasgow Conference

President of Latvia Egils Levits will attend the opening of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow (UK) on 1-2 November 2021. In his address to other world leaders...

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