

EUROPEAN POLICIES FOR ENERGY SUSTAINABILITY

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Distinguished guests,

Dear friends,

Good morning everyone and welcome to Brussels.

It is a pleasure to be with you today, and I would like to thank Professor Adamo and the Geoprogress network for organising this event and inviting me to speak.

Energy sustainability is an issue that I have always considered a priority, even before coming to Brussels.

Nowadays, many European funds are dedicated to energy efficiency, but I remember when I was President of the Piemonte region that we decided to dedicate one third of the regional funds to energy efficiency and clean energy policies before it was mandatory.

I firmly believe that the necessary answers to the challenges posed by the future of energy sustainability will come from a coordinated efforts made by the local and regional authorities, together with the vital efforts from the European and national levels.

Frameworks and common rules must be found at EU level, but then they will have to be implemented on the different territories of our continent by the institutions which are closer to the citizens.

We have reached an historical achievement when the EU launched the Energy Union in 2015.

We created a new momentum, trying to drive towards the necessary transition to a low-carbon, secure and competitive economy.

The Energy Union was important, of course, from an environmental point of view, because we owe this to the future generations. We are responsible to deliver a greener and environmentally friendly society to our children. But this is not the only reason: from economic benefits to security issues, there are many other reasons why we should act as Europeans in this sector.

For example, we all know that the Energy Union is more than just energy and climate. It is also a unique opportunity to modernise Europe's economy, making it low carbon and more efficient with regards to the use of resources. Investing in clean energy is an investment for the future, one that can create new jobs and produce positive effects on workers and business together.

Another key aspect is the security of supply, which is quite relevant given the international situation we face today. In the current unstable geopolitical conditions, it is crucial for the European Union to have the necessary elements in order to be independent and secure in terms of energy supply. And this result can be achieved only if European countries work together closely and with a common strategy.

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We are starting to see some results: in 2016 for example wind has overtaken coal as the second main source of energy in Europe (after gas) and the EU remains the second largest market for wind power (after China).

Solar energy is rapidly reaching its economic sustainability, and low-enthalpy geothermal energy has been sustainable in that sense for a while now. Also, we still have space to explore different sustainable sources of energy, such as tidal power.

Once the amount of energy necessary for the European needs is secured, the next step will be to be able to manage it appropriately and efficiently. In this sense, an important role can be played by the development of a modern system of smart grid: this would allow us to have an energy market reliable, flexible, efficient and able to support both the citizen's needs and the business ones.

This is why one of the main chapter of the Energy Union is dedicated to research, innovation and competitiveness. A better European system, up to date with the latest research development, is what we need in order to compete with other players on the global scale.

We have some good news: the data show how we started to change the pattern of the relations between energy consumption and growth.

In the past, a rise of the GDP was only possible through an increase in energy consumption: in recent times, we have changed this with more efficiency and a more relevant use of renewables. While GDP between 2005 and 2015 **grew** by around 10%, the primary energy consumption **decreased** by 11% in the same period.

Economic growth and a more efficient, secure, and sustainable use of energy can walk together and Europe is the proof of it.

As I was saying before, we should acknowledge the role that can be played by cities and local authorities in this contest. I remember when I was President of the Committee of the Regions the precious work we done through the Covenant of Mayors. Today we have also the **Global Covenant of Mayors** for climate change, bringing together the experiences at the EU and UN levels.

In terms of financing, the European Union is making concrete efforts. If we take the opportunities given by EFSI, we can see that already 24% of the total financing has been approved in the field of energy – with a priority on energy efficiency, renewable energy and energy infrastructure. And the trend is set to increase significantly in the future.

Also, we cannot forget the contribution made the **European Structural and Investment Funds where for the** 2014-2020 period around 17 (seventeen) billion euro will be available for energy efficiency.

As you can probably feel by my words today, I am confident that Europe can be protagonist in the future of energy sustainability and in the fight to climate change. We should all be well aware of the proportion of the challenge, but also ready to use the many strong points we have.

Together and with coordinated efforts we can be the leader of a global energy revolution!

Thanks for inviting me and I wish you all an interesting debate!