

# FIVE YEARS SINCE PARIS, AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD BACK BETTER

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Degradation - GHGs, Ozone Depletion and Climate Change

December 12 marked the [five-year anniversary](#) of the [Paris Agreement](#). The international community, including the European Union (EU) and India, gathered at the Climate Ambition Summit 2020 to celebrate and recognise our resolve in working towards a safer, more resilient world with net-zero emissions. A world we can be proud to leave to our grandchildren.

During the past five years, the determination of the global community has certainly been tested and, in the past few months, we have all been hit by a virus with a potentially long-lasting impact on our society and economies.

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In the midst of this pandemic, is it realistic to call for stronger global action to fight climate change? We believe that the case is more valid now than ever. Faced with overwhelming scientific evidence, a more pertinent question might be: Can we afford to let things worsen?

The science is irrefutable: for future prosperity, we must invest in greening the global economy. We cannot afford not to do so. Post-COVID-19 recovery needs to be a green recovery.

Back in December 2019, the European Commission launched the European Green Deal — a new growth model and roadmap to achieve climate neutrality in the EU by 2050. Our- “Next Generation EU” recovery package and our next long-term budget earmark more than half a trillion euros to address climate change.

Paris Accord | [A race against the clock to keep the planet cool](#)

To reach climate neutrality by 2050, on December 11, EU leaders unanimously agreed on the 2030 target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% compared to 1990 levels. This will further accelerate the fast decrease in the costs of low carbon technologies. The cost of solar photovoltaics has already declined by 82% between 2010 and 2019. Achieving the 55% target will even help us to save €100 billion in the next decade and up to €3 trillion by 2050.

No government can tackle climate change alone. We will pursue all avenues to foster cooperation with partners from all around the world. India is a key player in this global endeavour. The rapid development of solar and wind energy in India in the last few years is a good example of the action needed worldwide.

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The EU and India are committed to the full implementation of the Paris Agreement. India has taken a number of very significant flagship initiatives in this respect, such as the International Solar Alliance, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the Leadership Group for Industry Transition. India and Team Europe are engaged to make a success of the forthcoming international gatherings: COP 26 in Glasgow on climate change and COP 15 in Kunming on biodiversity.

There is a sense of global momentum emerging towards keeping the promise of the Paris

Agreement and securing our future on this planet. Five years after the signing of the Paris Agreement, it is more important than ever that the international community comes forward with clear strategies for net-zero emissions and to enhance the global level of ambition for 2030.

Also read | [We are still in denial despite Paris climate deal: Greta Thunberg](#)

Together with the delivery of the \$100 billion of climate financing to countries most in need, these will be deliverables for the climate negotiations when they resume at COP 26 in Glasgow next November. Team Europe will continue to work closely with India on green investments and the sharing of best practices and technologies.

We can avoid the most dramatic impacts of climate change on our societies. Our global, regional, national, local and individual recovery plans are an opportunity to 'build back better'. We owe it to the next generation who will have to bear the burden of climate change and pay off the debt of the recovery.

Editorial | [Green over brown: On India's climate goals](#)

Good public policies are indispensable but not sufficient. We will also need to foster small individual actions to attain a big collective impact. This is the snowball effect we need starting from the Paris Agreement. With climate neutrality as our goal, the world should mobilise its best scientists, business people, policymakers, academics, civil society actors and citizens to protect together something we all share beyond borders and species: our planet.

*Ugo Astuto is Ambassador of the European Union (EU). This opinion piece is endorsed by the Ambassadors and High Commissioners of the 27 EU member states*

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