

Ursula von der Leyen
Candidate for President of the European Commission

Brussels, 15 July 2019

*Mr Dacian Ciolos
Member of the European Parliament
60, rue Wiertz
1047 Brussels*

Dear President Ciolos,

I want to thank you for your invitation and the opportunity to present myself last week to your Renew Europe family in the European Parliament. We had an open, frank and constructive exchange of ideas. I believe there were many areas where we can find common ground.

This reflects my open and inclusive way of working. As candidate for President, I want to listen. I want to establish a special relationship with the European Parliament, and the different political groups, based on honesty and trust. With the stakes so high for Europe, it is essential that we bring people together and build consensus. This is why I am glad to have an opportunity to provide some more detail on my vision for Europe.

My vision is of a Union that tackles the generational challenges of our time in the most ambitious way possible. We must do so while upholding our shared values and building a fairer and equal society. I believe we share these goals. This European promise is an enduring one and I would like to deliver on it with you.

My priorities as Commission President will draw on the contributions that I have received from the European Parliament's political groups, including Renew Europe, and on the European Council's Strategic Agenda for 2019-24.

I have prepared detailed Political Guidelines for the next European Commission. These cover the entire range of policies which the European Union will have to work on, both the European Parliament and the Council together. I will send these to you on Tuesday morning and present them to you in the Plenary session.

I would already like to respond to the main points raised in your letter and indicate how I would seek to address them if elected. The answers below are a snapshot of the ideas that I hope we will bring to life together. For ease of reference, I have grouped these by broad themes:

A climate neutral Europe

My main priority as Commission President will be to make Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050. I will put this ambition into law in my first 100 days in office.

*We have to be **more ambitious** when it comes to our **2030 targets**. I want to reduce CO₂ emissions by **at least 50%** by 2030.*

*However to achieve real impact, the world has to **move together**. The EU will lead international negotiations to increase the level of ambition of other major emitters by 2021.*

*By this date, I commit myself to putting forward a comprehensive plan to increase the EU target for **2030 towards 55%** in a responsible way. The plan will be based on social, economic and environmental impact assessments that ensures a level playing field and stimulates innovation, competitiveness and jobs.*

*To reach our ambition, we need to use **all instruments and funds** at our disposal. This includes the extension of the **Emissions Trading System** and the introduction of a **Carbon Border Tax**.*

***We will leave no one behind as we move forward**. Our ambition can never come at the expense of our people and our regions. We must support them through this transition. Even if we share the same destination, we do not all have the same starting point. This is why we need tailored support for those most affected, notably through a new **Just Transition Fund**.*

*But public finance will not be enough. We also need to tap into private finance by putting green and sustainable funding at the heart of our investment chain and financial system. I will propose a **Sustainable Europe Investment Plan** and turn parts of the European Investment Bank in **Europe's climate bank**.*

A more prosperous Union

*Europe's economy is now on a more stable footing. Jobs, growth and investment are back – or even beyond – where they were before the economic and financial crisis. But there is still a lot more to do to ensure that Europe is able to resist any future external shocks. I passionately believe that we need a more attractive investment environment and growth which creates **quality jobs, especially for young people.***

*In order to do this, I will prioritise the further deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union. We need to use all of the tools at our disposal. This is why I will use the **full flexibility within the Stability and Growth Pact**, for a more growth friendly fiscal stance in the euro area while safeguarding fiscal responsibility. To support Member States' growth reforms and investments, I will help deliver a **Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness for the euro area.***

*Europe needs to do all it can to protect those most vulnerable when our economy takes a hit. In this spirit, I will propose a **European Unemployment Benefit Reinsurance Scheme.** This will protect our citizens and reduce the pressure on Member States' finances during external shocks. I will complete the **Banking Union** and its two missing elements, a **common backstop to the Single Resolution Fund** and a **European Deposit Insurance Scheme.***

*I firmly believe that Europe's economic policy coordination must go hand in hand with our social rights, our climate neutrality objective and our competitive industry. This is why I will refocus the **European Semester** into an instrument that would take the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals** into account.*

Upgrading Europe for the digital age

Digital technologies are transforming the world. I believe in the opportunities digitalisation creates, as long as we set the boundary conditions right, including by finding the balance between innovation and privacy.

*The next challenge for our economy is to allow the flow and the wide use of data and develop trusted Artificial Intelligence solutions, in full respect of our values. In my first 100 days in office, I will put forward legislation for a **coordinated European approach on the human and ethical implications of Artificial Intelligence.***

Europe has to rediscover its **technology leadership** by investing in research, especially in blockchain, quantum computing and algorithms. We should use the full potential of a data-driven economy. In doing so, we will also be investing in disruptive research, in breakthrough innovation, accepting that failure will be part of our path.

An open and fair trade agenda

I believe we can strengthen Europe's role as a **global leader** and standard setter through a strong, open and fair trade agenda. We believe in trade because it supports 36 million jobs and accounts for over a third of our Gross Domestic Product.

But with the increased wealth that trade generates comes a greater responsibility. I will ensure that every **new trade agreement** concluded in my mandate has a **dedicated sustainable development chapter** and respects the highest standards of climate, environmental, and labour protection with a zero tolerance policy on child labour.

I will appoint a **Chief Trade Enforcement Officer** to improve the **compliance and enforcement** of our trade agreements, and regularly report back to the European Parliament.

In the same vein, I will ensure my Commissioners debrief the European Parliament at all stages of international negotiations, following the mould set by the Brexit negotiations. Moreover, my Commission will always propose that **provisional application** of trade agreements takes place only once the European Parliament has given its consent.

Upholding the rule of Law

The **respect of the rule of law** is central to my vision for a Union of equality and social fairness. There can be no compromise when it comes to our core values.

I will ensure that we make the most of our **full toolbox at European level**. I support an additional **comprehensive European Rule of Law Mechanism**. This should have an EU-wide scope and should include objective annual reporting. The monitoring approach will be the same in every Member State. None of us is perfect on this issue.

The Commission will do this **monitoring in close dialogue with national authorities on the basis of law**, notably the recent case-law set by our independent Court of

*Justice. I will also ensure a **greater role for the European Parliament in the rule of law mechanism.***

*This approach brings transparency. It allows early detection. It offers targeted support to resolve any issues at an early stage, without ruling out an effective, proportionate and dissuasive response as a last resort. I intend to focus on **tighter enforcement**, using recent **judgements of the Court of Justice** showing the impact of rule of law breaches on EU law as a basis.*

*I stand by the proposal to make the rule of law an integral part of the next **Multiannual Financial Framework.***

Giving Europeans a greater say

I want Europeans to build the future of our Union. They should play a leading and active part in setting our priorities and our level of ambition.

*I want citizens to have their say at a **Conference on the Future of Europe, to start in 2020** and run for two years. The Conference should bring together citizens, including a strong role for young people, civil society, and European institutions as equal partners.*

The Conference should be well prepared with a clear scope and clear objectives, agreed between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

I am ready to follow up on the main issues that will emerge from the Conference, including by legislative action. I am also open for Treaty change. You have my full support should there be a proposal for the Conference to be led by a Member of the European Parliament.

Strengthening Europe's democracy

As Commission President, I will be the European Parliament's greatest advocate. As the House of the people, it should have a stronger role in shaping and designing our future. In a democracy like ours, this is a must.

*I support a **right of initiative for the European Parliament.** When Parliament, acting by a majority of its members, adopts resolutions requesting the Commission to submit legislative proposals, **I commit to responding with a legislative act**, in full respect of the proportionality, subsidiarity and better law making principles.*

I will ask my Commissioners to work hand-in-hand with the European Parliament at every stage of designing and debating resolutions. This will help make the process as smooth and effective as possible.

During the last week, I spent time with Members from across the House. I have sensed the palpable frustration with the way our Union chooses its leaders. We must address this together.

*To rebuild trust and confidence, I propose to broker discussions on this issue between the European Parliament and the European Council. We should improve the **Spitzenkandidaten** system to make it more visible to the wider electorate. We should also address the issue of **transnational lists** in the European elections, as a complementary tool of European democracy.*

The Conference on the Future of Europe should come forward with legislative and other proposals on these matters by no later than summer 2020.

The Commission will follow up on these proposals where it has competence to act, and will support the European Parliament in amending the electoral law and in securing its agreement in Council. The new rules should be in place well in time for the European elections of 2024 to ensure greater transparency and democratic legitimacy.

*More broadly, I will work with the European Parliament on our shared goal of a more democratic and efficient Union. We need to move towards **full co-decision** power for the European Parliament and away from unanimity for climate, energy, social and taxation policies. In the same vein, **qualified majority** should become the rule for **external affairs**.*

College of Commissioners

I will instil a new and more inclusive leadership and work culture, with less hierarchies and more working together. I want to make the institution more agile and flexible, as well as more transparent in the way it works.

*I will form a **fully gender equal College of Commissioners**. By the end of my mandate, I will ensure we have full equality **at all levels of Commission management**. I will accept nothing less.*

The Commission leadership team consists of the President and two executive vice-Presidents. One of the two, the First Vice-President will replace the President in her

absence. The size of their cabinets must reflect their double function, comparable to the High Representative Vice-President.

Our partnership with the United Kingdom

Last but not least, I want to explain my thinking on Brexit. This was an issue that was raised by several Members from your Group.

I very much regret that the United Kingdom has decided to leave the European Union. But I fully respect this decision. Brexit creates uncertainty for citizens' rights, for economic and territorial actors, and for the stability and peace on the Island of Ireland. The **Withdrawal Agreement** negotiated with the United Kingdom is the best and only deal possible for an orderly withdrawal.

If elected, I am ready to pave the way to the ambitious and strategic partnership we want to build with the United Kingdom. Should more time be required, and should there be good reasons provided, I will support a further extension if good reasons are provided.

I trust the snapshot I have presented in this letter answers the points which I know you hold dear. I want to thank you and the Members of your Group for your strong European commitment. I look forward to presenting these ideas and many more on Tuesday when I present my Political Guidelines. I stand ready to work with you for a positive agenda for a better and stronger Europe.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ursula von der Leyen', written in a cursive style.

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