



**Call for Papers "Geopolitics & Values: what is the real power of the EU?"**

**EU CLIMATE DIPLOMACY: A TOOL TO OVERCOME THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC  
AND PROMOTE EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM?**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The year 2020 was expected to be the year of climate action. The new European Commission started implementing its European Green Deal programme and COP26 would close the year with more ambitious climate commitments. Unfortunately, the emergence of COVID-19 threatened to put an end to the international climate momentum and hinder the EU diplomatic strategy. This article traces the history of the development of EU climate diplomacy to better understand the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak on the EU climate strategy, and on the international fight against climate change at large. The ongoing ‘game-changing’ pandemic is not only hindering climate negotiations but also weakening climate action ambitions. Nevertheless, there is a silver lining for climate diplomacy to reverse the trend. In the course of this analysis recommendations were drawn for the EU to strive for a more modern multilateralism, unified union and intersectional climate policy.

## **Short bio**

Angeline Sanzay is a young professional currently performing a traineeship within the European Commission and working in the field of EU climate policy. She graduated from the College of Europe in 2019 with a degree in European Interdisciplinary Studies and a specialisation in EU environmental and energy policies. She has already written several pieces of paper tackling different aspects of the EU policies in the fight against climate change.



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## TABLE OF ACRONYMS

This table lists the main acronyms used in this research.

Acronym	Meaning
COP	Conference of the Parties
EC	European Commission
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
IEA	International Energy Agency
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
SB52	United Nations Climate Change meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies



On the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2019, the new European Commission presented the European Green Deal, "a roadmap for making the European Union's (EU) economy sustainable", closely followed by the European climate law proposals launched on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 setting the EU's strategy to climate-neutrality by 2050 (EEAS, 2020). Such ambitious targets reaffirm the leading role of the EU as a global actor in the fight against climate change. Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, asserted that climate change represents one of the biggest geopolitical threats of our time and needs to be at the core of the EU's foreign policy (Borrell, 2020). This is a strong political signal that climate action will be one of the greatest priorities of the EU's external policy and that EU leadership is pivotal in raising the level of global climate ambition.

However, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the newly adopted agenda of the European Commission, paralysing governments and international institutions, including the decisional core of the EU in Brussels. Environmental priorities were shaken and lost their first place on the podium of priorities of the new Commission (Simon, 2020). Most international events playing a crucial role in the EU's green diplomacy game were either postponed or cancelled including the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) and the 2020 United Nations (UN) Convention on biological diversity (Citepa, 2020). All these events represented interesting opportunities for the EU to strengthen its alliances and advocate for more climate actions. The forthcoming consequences are not yet measurable and making up for the lost time in international environmental negotiations will be difficult in a race against climate change in which we already missed the start. Nevertheless, a silver lining remains and a window of opportunity is wide open for the EU to reinforce its green diplomacy strategy.

This article intends to analyse the state of play of the EU green diplomacy in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the solutions available to promote effective multilateralism to reach climate targets. The research is structured in three steps. The first chapter traces back the history of the shaping of the EU climate diplomacy and analyses the current state of play and main actors on the international stage. The second chapter focuses on the consequences of the pandemic on climate diplomacy. To conclude, and building on preliminary research, the last chapter reflects on the opportunities available to overcome the COVID-19 crisis while addressing climate concerns on the international stage. It draws on some recommendations to promote effective multilateralism to better address the environmental crisis that needs coordinated action from all international stakeholders interacting with the EU. The COVID-19 crisis should catalyse change and make climate action a key priority in the EU's cooperation strategies with its partners, making best use of its green diplomacy tools.

## **I. The European Union climate diplomacy**



The sustainable protection and conservation of the environment as well as of the human rights to a healthy and ecologically balanced ecosystem are crucial issues of our time. It is both a duty and a right of the human community to preserve and protect our planet and its beings for present and future generations (Iftime, 2014). Legal frameworks and long-term strategies are therefore defined both at the national and international level. In recent decades, international organisations have multiplied efforts towards a greener future through international regulations and recommendations which open the stage for diplomatic strategies, debates and dialogues (Iftime, 2014). Through its economic and cultural influence, characterised under the concept of "soft power", the EU has tried over the years to influence global leaders to engage towards greater climate ambition.



Summit of Paris in October 1972 © Communautés européennes 1972

Over time, the European Union established itself as a key protagonist in these discussions and the climate diplomacy game overall. This is particularly noteworthy given that environmental policymaking was not even mentioned at the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 (Adelle et al., 2018). The dawn of an EU environmental policy arose in 1972 at the Paris Summit where the European Commission (EC) drafted its first Environmental Action Programme which was adopted a year later (Hildebrand, 1993). One of the main incentives for the EU's commitment to environmental policy was the growing politicisation of environmental concerns and the realisation that environmental issues needed transboundary action (Knill and Liefferink, 2012). The founding treaties of the Union did not include environmental policy per se, yet, it could be derived from the broader interpretation of the treaties and regarded as one of the inherent objectives of the European Community. For instance, in the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) the Union engaged to "respect fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and as they result from the





constitutional traditions common to the Member States, shall constitute general principles of the Union's law." (Article 6 (2), Treaty on European Union, 1992). The respect of human rights also includes ensuring a healthy and ecological environment to all. It is only since 1997 that "environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of the Community policies [...] in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development" (Article 6, EC Treaty, 1997). Following regulations such as the Treaty of Amsterdam (1987), the Treaty of Nice (2001) and the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) improved the EU environmental policy's regulation by providing a legal framework to ensure a high level of environmental protection across the EU (Iftime, 2014).

The EU's domestic and international environmental and climate policies evolved in tandem, both in response to international developments and to protect the EU's internal interests. The international arena has given the EU an important stimulus to develop its internal objectives and policies, which in return further contributed to the Union's international credibility (Adelle et al., 2018). Some key international events are particularly significant in the building of the EU's green diplomacy. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 and the following Kyoto Protocol in 1997 are among them. In 1990, the EU, then consisting of twelve Member States, committed itself to stabilising CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2000 at 1990 levels, which it also advocated in the UNFCCC climate negotiations in 1992 regarded as a milestone event in driving climate action at other governance levels (Adelle et al., 2018; Oberthür, 2016). For the ensuing 1997 Kyoto Protocol negotiations, the EU raised its ambitions even higher by committing itself to reducing greenhouse gases emissions by 8% below the 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012, compared to 5% for the identified industrialised countries (European Commission, 2004). The EU ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2002 which accelerated the development of a domestic climate policy with the adoption of a series of legislative measures including the EU Emission Trading System and the climate and energy package, among others (Adelle et al., 2018). Although the Kyoto Protocol had a significant impact on the EU and other parts of the world, it did not live up to expectations in providing the required climate action, nor did it provide the necessary impetus for international climate ambition, as most of the multilateral processes in the 2000s led to deadlocks that culminated in the failed Copenhagen Summit in 2009 (Oberthür, 2016). While the development of the EU's internal climate policy slowed down after Copenhagen, in 2014 the European Council nevertheless achieved an important breakthrough in updating the EU's climate policy framework to a 40% GHGs reduction by 2030, which served as a basis for the EU in its international climate negotiations leading to the Paris agreements on climate change in 2015 (Adelle et al., 2018, p. 107).



French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius - President of the COP21 climate change conference - bangs down the gavel on 12 December 2015, after representatives of 196 countries approved a sweeping environmental agreement during a multinational meeting in Paris, France. @ U.S Department of State from United States

Widely praised as historic, the Paris Agreement Climate Summit exceeded expectations by redefining the political space for future global climate policy, notably by providing directions towards worldwide decarbonisation, and marked a shift from traditional centralised climate governance to more polycentric and decentralised one (Oberthür, 2016, p. 120-121). A multitude of climate governance levels sprouted at the local, regional, national, supranational, international levels engaging a wider variety of stakeholders from public to private sectors as well as cities and regions (Oberthür, 2016, p. 120). Climate negotiations are no longer limited to the only UNFCCC international fora but are increasingly shifting to other venues, for instance, the Montreal Protocol for the protection of the ozone layer, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate, the G20, the G7 and others (Adelle et al., 2018; Oberthür, 2016). These initiatives complement the multilateral negotiations occurring at the UNFCCC which remains central in the EU climate diplomacy strategy. The EU is often seen as a "global pioneer" in the field of environmental protection and traditionally played a leading role on climate action, in particular via environmental cooperation through bi- and multilateral summits, policy dialogues, diplomacy, transnational policy and expert networks (Adelle et al., 2018, p. 39-40). Overall, the Paris agreement was a significant achievement for multilateralism as well as for climate governance, in particular for the construction of the EU climate diplomacy.

The creation and implementation of a climate diplomacy action plan in 2015 by the European External Action Service (EEAS) contributed to the success of the Paris Agreement and in particular to effectively promote the EU's climate ambition (Oberthür, 2016, p. 122). Since climate and environmental policies are areas of shared competence between the European Union and its Member States, it thus requires strong coordination between the different actors involved on the international stage even more so because they all have their own seat at international



negotiations tables. The European Commission and the Member States acting through the European Council have the main role in the EU's climate diplomacy — with reduced scope for the European Parliament — aligning their position to stand with a unified voice (Adelle et al., 2018, p. 109). To facilitate coordination, the European Council launched the Green Diplomacy Network in 2003, now chaired by the EEAS since 2012, and which involves officials dealing with international environment and sustainable development issues in the EU's Ministries of Foreign Affairs and their diplomatic missions including the EEAS and the EU Delegations (European Commission, 2019).

With the launch of the European Green Deal in late 2019 for a Union "striving to be the first climate-neutral continent", the new European Commission has reaffirmed its ambition to be a world leader in climate change and paved the way for upcoming climate negotiations (Ursula von der Leyen, 2019).

## **II. Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on climate diplomacy**

The year 2020 promised to be a year of climate ambition for the European Union. The new commission inscribed climate action at the core of its new agenda and already planned a list of measures to institute in the months and years to come. However, the unforeseen global pandemic secured its place on the podium of priorities for all nations around the world. Not only did COVID-19 paralyse global and European decision-making centres, but it also dramatically altered the announced climate aspirations. The consequences of international climate diplomacy are truly historic and difficult to measure.

The ongoing 'game-changing' COVID-19 pandemic is one of the greatest threats to multilateralism since the end of World War II, as nations are now facing a myriad of crises that transcend borders including an ongoing global health emergency, a financial crisis, commodity price shocks, all of which adding to the current global threat of climate change, conflicts and poverty (Chikvaidze, 2020). It also came as a shock to oil producers who experienced unprecedented price volatility, and to airline companies who were grounded and challenged for their mass flying paradigm (Willemart, 2020). But first and foremost, it is our globalised system and western way-of-life that the pandemic questions. With a socioeconomic crisis looming on the horizon, countries are slowly isolating themselves instead of questioning their own practices and instigating a systemic and sustainable change. For the first time in a decade, annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions dropped drastically as outlined by the International Energy Agency (IEA) in its recently published Global Energy Review 2020 (IEA, 2020). The pandemic and especially the resulting global lockdown measures gave us a glimpse of the degree of global transformation needed to meet the Paris Agreement goals to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 to 2°C. However, even if the pandemic might have some positive effects on the environment, the measures undertaken are not sustainable on the long term neither economically nor socially, and governments should rather envision a sustainable and systemic transformation of our economy.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic fosters and strengthens past tendencies towards ultra-nationalism, unilateralism and protectionism, further dooming multilateral cooperation and



dialogues (Görlich and Stein, 2020; Make, 2020). As governments strive to rapidly rebuild their economies to minimise the impacts of the pandemic, they are also moving further away from previous priorities to the detriment of climate action (Pisani-Ferry, 2020). Although a collective response is needed to address these global challenges, the already deep mistrust in international governance institutions is deepening and multilateralism as an effective problem-solving tool is further ignored (Chikvaidze, 2020). If, on the one hand, global institutions are blamed for their lack of coordination and efficiency, on the other hand, the will for common action disappears. As claimed António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, "Multilateralism is under fire, precisely when we need it most" (United Nations Secretary-General, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic is only reinforcing this already existing concern.

As the pandemic spread worldwide and after the first months of adaptation, scholars, journalists and the wider public easily drew a parallel between the pandemic outbreak and the climate change threat. They both are cross-border issues affecting all nations, but not equally as the least developed countries are often hit harder, and requiring a multilateral response. Klenert et al. identified four phases of international collaboration during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which can be akin to international collaboration on climate: (1) denialism leading to inadequate international responses, (2) isolationist action, (3) knowledge and resource sharing and (4) full global cooperation (Klenert et al., 2020). In the international fight against climate change, denialism was the first approach in the early 2000s, and still for some nations today, which now transformed into climate isolationism for most countries, described as "climate-positive initiatives only when domestic non-climate benefits can be captured", only a few countries, including the EU, have now reached stage three by promoting international collaboration (Klenert et al., 2020). As countries are drawn further away from multilateralism with the COVID-19 pandemic, full global cooperation on climate change remains an unattainable ideal for the time being.

Multilateralism is also threatened by the pandemic which eclipses all possibilities of meetings and negotiations. It is therefore not only multilateralism that is in peril, but also (climate) diplomacy, which is increasingly being stripped of its battlefield. On 1st April 2020, the COP Bureau of the UNFCCC declared that the COP26 originally planned from the 9th to 20th of November 2020 in Glasgow will be postponed to a later date due to the COVID-19 pandemic (United Nations Climate Change, 2020a). The same day, they also rescheduled the UN Climate Change meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies (SB52) initially taking place in Bonn from 1st to 11th of June (United Nations Climate Change, 2020b). First postponed to the end of the same year, the two events will now take place in the course of 2021, depending on the evolution of the pandemic. Nevertheless, COP26 was expected to only be postponed for a few months, to allow COP27 to take place at the end of 2021 as planned. Yet, following a British government request, the Bureau of the COP agreed to postpone the conference to November 2021, insisting nonetheless on the importance of maintaining an international climate action momentum (United Nations Climate Change, 2020c).

For the first time since its creation, the world will experience a year without COP which, symbolically, may have drastic consequences on the dynamics of engagement of state and non-state actors (Citepa, 2020). The limited outcomes of COP25 raised expectations that COP26 would give way to stronger climate commitments in 2020 (Oxford Analytica, 2020a). Besides, COP26 was particularly eagerly awaited since the Member States were expected to deliver their updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for the first time since the Paris Agreement launched its process for regular progress review (Willemart, 2020). Furthermore, international negotiations under the aegis of the COPs are not limited to this venue alone. The inter-COP



technical and political sessions also play a crucial role in preparing a few months ahead, working with a sense of urgency that helps unravel blockages — a feeling of immediacy that may not be present at COP26 (Citepa, 2020). On 1st January 2021, the Paris Agreement will come into effect while the operating rules have not been finalised yet — which was the purpose of the COP26 negotiations — dangerously delaying progress on climate action commitments (Citepa, 2020).

The global pandemic may have put an end to the climate action momentum and causes uncertainty about future climate events such as COP27, Climate Summits, NDC updates, Global stocktake and so on. In disrupting crucial international events where climate diplomacy was key to progress on climate ambition, the COVID-19 pandemic, currently seen as the main priority for most governments, may have overshadowed an issue with even more dramatic consequences, namely climate change. The pandemic is not only hindering climate negotiations but may also weaken climate action ambition in the long term. Nevertheless, there is a silver lining for climate diplomacy to reverse the trend.

### **III. Opportunities and recommendations to overcome both the COVID-19 and climate crisis**

In the present context, mainly dominated by the COVID-19 crisis, which is characterised by a historic drop in GHG emissions and the disruption of entire economic sectors, a small window of opportunity is open to aspire to a post-pandemic world compatible with climate objectives and to revive the climate momentum. Once the emergency phase is over, and as governments intend to limit the economic and social downturn of the pandemic, they will also have to address the urge to "build back better" and invest towards more sustainable, low-carbon and resilient economies while not losing sight of the many other pressing issues such as extreme poverty, migration and inequality, which, along with climate change, have been overlooked by the pandemic (Bassetti, 2020; Görlich and Stein, 2020; Make, 2020). As exemplified in the previous, with most international climate events postponed or cancelled, opportunities to build on the climate action dynamic are scarce and ephemeral but not insignificant (Pisani-Ferry, 2020).

Although multilateralism has recently been set aside for a more individualistic and protectionist approach, it is an essential tool for solving issues that cross borders such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. Only intergovernmental cooperation, functional multilateral institutions and collective action would effectively contribute to overcome both challenges. And this is where the EU green diplomacy comes into play. The EU, a leader on the climate action front, has not lost hope and has stated that it will continue to feed on the climate momentum through domestic and international actions, in particular by pursuing its work on the European Green Deal (Timmermans, 2020). It is an open invitation to all countries to also contribute to the international effort to fight climate change and shape greener economies by reinvigorating multilateralism (Willemart, 2020).

On the 4th March 2020, the European Commission proposed the first European Climate Law as part of the European Green Deal to enshrine the 2050 climate-neutrality target into law, thus becoming the first continent to lead the way towards even higher climate ambition (European Commission, 2020). Later this year, the international arena witnessed major economies and businesses pledging to a long-term "net-zero" target including the 1st, 6th and 8th largest net emitters, respectively, China, which set a target for 2060, Japan and South-Korea, which both set





their target for 2050 (Oxford Analytica, 2020b). It is difficult to conclude whether the EU alone stirred such impetus, however, it certainly played its part which now leads to increased international pressure on climate matters. To effectively address the interconnected issues of COVID-19 and climate change, a systemic solution should be put forward to tackle them both simultaneously with climate diplomacy and multilateralism playing a central role in the strategy (Make, 2020).

A wind of change is blowing with the world's leading economies and corporations — key stakeholders in short — widely committing to stronger climate actions across the globe amid a global pandemic. Among them, the EU is leading the way. The COVID-19 outbreak has undoubtedly weakened the EU's climate diplomacy strategy, but there is still a breach and the Union must seize the opportunity to "recover better", stronger and greener.

By adapting its climate diplomacy strategy, the EU has the opportunity to address simultaneously the climate crisis, the multilateralism issue and the pandemic outbreak. Here is how:

### **1. Promote inclusive multilateralism**

Although multilateralism appears as an essential tool to overcome current cross-border crises such as the pandemic and climate change, it was widely disregarded and nations are even moving further away from it. Thus, the multilateralism crisis is not new and needs to evolve to better meet the needs of its time. Chikvaidze (2020) advocates for a more modern multilateralism that is more inclusive and more collaborative and that is no longer "just about states". Within an interconnected and interdependent world, collective response is needed to face global challenges involving not only governments and international organisations alone, but also a wider range of stakeholders such as the private and public sectors, local and regional authorities, civil society organisations, think tanks, academia, citizens and youth (Chikvaidze, 2020; Ostrom, 2010; Victor et al., 2019).

By inviting all relevant actors to the negotiation tables, multilateralism might be given a new and much-needed lease of life. Enhanced stakeholder representation in international climate diplomacy would, on the one hand, better reflect local realities and potential to implement feasible and sustainable solutions, and on the other, prevent national and political inaction (Klenert, 2020). Quoting Chikvaidze (2020), "countries do not have a monopoly on commitment and good ideas". The European Union bears a great responsibility in promoting a more inclusive and collaborative multilateralism, in particular through its climate diplomacy initiatives, leading by example towards global solutions to global challenges.

### **2. One voice, one EU**

Promoting a modern multilateralism system is a crucial step, yet, it is not enough if the EU does not strengthen its position as a full-fledged actor within multilateral institutions.

As exemplified in the second part of this analysis (Klenert et al., 2020), there are several phases to international collaboration. In the wake of the COVID-19 epidemic, a majority of countries, including the EU Member States, have isolated themselves, closing their borders and neglecting international cooperation. These patterns of behaviour are similar to the international response to climate change. Although the EU promotes international collaboration on both the



global pandemic and climate change, its Member States remain divided. The internal fragmentation thus weakens the international position and legitimacy of the European Union.

Throughout this paper, we already demonstrated that international collaboration is essential to address global and complex issues such as global pandemics and climate change. On the other hand, the Union has stated its willingness to remain a leader on the international stage in each of these challenges. Therefore, to strengthen its position, the EU should also strive to remain united on these issues, in particular when advocating them in multilateral fora. Climate diplomacy has the potential to be used as an effective tool to promote common ideas inside and outside the EU and to enable the latter to lead the way towards a sustainable future and a green recovery.

### **3. Extend the scope of climate diplomacy to other fields**

The climate change issue, just like the COVID-19 pandemic, is global, complex and intersectional. Consequently, it affects all areas of the economy and society regardless of the segmentation of policy areas nor of political agenda priorities. Through its European Green Deal, the European Commission intended to express this idea by stressing the urgency of climate change and its cross-sectional nature. However, efforts still need to be undertaken with regard to its diplomatic strategy.

At the forefront of EU climate diplomacy, the EEAS has limited resources to target every EU policy areas, especially when it comes to including climate change in all its foreign actions (Adelle, 2018). For this reason, the EU's trade policy remains a difficult challenge in the EU climate diplomacy strategy and does not always translate into environmentally friendly agreements (Bjerkem, 2019). In addition, among the EU delegations ensuring the EU's external representation, only a few have attachés dedicated to climate and environment (i.e. China, India, Canada and Australia), and even in these cases the said diplomat often shares other responsibilities in parallel (Adelle, 2018).

Although climate action has taken a central place on the EU's political agenda, it remains a niche area, particularly concerning EU climate diplomacy. Climate change and climate action must be given their own political voice and scope for action, as well as influence all spheres of the EU policies. The same goes for the diplomatic strategy of the EU, which should both have its own representative and be included in all spheres of discussion and not only be a side topic at the risk of further aggravating the multilateralism issue and of not properly addressing cross-sectional and cross-boundary challenges such as the current global pandemic or the future consequences of climate change.

### **Conclusion**

The year 2020 was shaping up to be the year of climate action. The new European Commission started implementing its European Green Deal programme designing its first policies through the green prism. COP26 was expected to close the year with more ambitious climate commitments through updated Member States' NDCs. Unfortunately, with the emergence of COVID-19, it was necessary to revise this programme, and particularly the diplomatic strategy, as international and domestic events were being cancelled or postponed one after the other.



Although the EU has become a leading example of climate action on the international stage in recent decades, the global pandemic has shaken its priorities and called into question its strength as a united and unified community. Together with most nations, the EU Member States have slowly isolated themselves, neglecting climate concerns and the tools of multilateralism, fragmenting the EU's narrative into multiple uncoordinated voices. The pandemic further deepened existing tendencies towards isolationism and protectionism, weakening an already challenged multilateralism. The global pandemic has threatened the climate momentum on which the EU relied to draw its climate diplomacy strategy with the aim of encouraging international partners to move towards a more sustainable and climate-friendly future.

However, although the beginning of 2020 seemed to have definitively condemned the climate momentum, a few glimmers of hope appeared in the course of the year, restoring optimism for significant progress in the fight against climate change and in favour of multilateralism. It is difficult to assess the extent to which the EU has played a significant role in recent national and business climate pledges, but its climate diplomacy strategy has certainly had an impact. Therefore, it is now the EU's turn to seize such an opportunity to maintain its leadership position in the race against climate change and the global pandemic, notably by adapting its climate diplomacy strategy. Our interconnected and interdependent world requires a new multilateralism system that is more inclusive and that gives a voice to everyone, and in particular those suffering the most from global challenges. In the early European hours of the pandemic, the EU's voice was more disharmonious than ever. What has always been a challenge within the Union became self-destructive during the pandemic outbreak, working against their common goals and undermining previously set priorities. To remain a reliable and legitimate international partner, the EU must strive for greater unity. Last recommendations proposed is to extend the scope of climate diplomacy, and climate action at large, which should not only be an EU policy on its own but rather included in every field and discussions. Just like the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change is a cross-sectional and cross-border issue that should be tackled in every layer of society and politics. With the European Green Deal, the EU has already started to pave the way for more modern multilateralism, a more unified union and an intersectional climate policy. Although the pandemic has somewhat shaken its goals, it should quickly get back on track to effectively address current and future challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic is certainly a historic upheaval in the construction of an appropriate and sustainable response to the challenge of climate change, and its consequences will last a few years. The EU climate diplomacy, if used effectively, could help meet the EU's climate expectations and commitments while supporting the global health emergency by providing a platform for a strengthened multilateralism. Yet it is only one piece of the puzzle. Whether this chapter of History will be written as progress or decline in the fight against climate change will mainly depend on the governments' willingness to act or not, even more so for the EU which claims to have the leading role.





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