



FoEE Big Action, Rond-Point Schuman, Brussels, opposite the EU Council
Speech by Fouad Hamdan, Director Friends of the Earth Europe
9 March 2007, during the European Summit of Heads of State

Dear activists, dear friends of the Earth,

Welcome to this Giant EU Energy Flag, welcome to this people's action.

European leaders across the street in the EU Council claim they are worried about climate change.

I personally believe them that they are worried. But not much else. When it comes to concrete action they chicken out of enforcing much-needed action.

European Heads of State in Brussels today say they want to promote energy efficiency and renewables to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

80% of Europe's CO₂ emissions comes from burning too much coal, oil and gas – and this in a highly wasteful way. So, if governments really take climate change seriously, they should revolutionise the way we produce and consume energy.

Europe's energy supply is based on inefficient and centralised dinosaur energy systems, favoring coal, oil, gas and nuclear.

Governments choose to protect these dirty energy technologies. They have always been doing that for decades with political support and with billions of Euros of subsidies. It comes therefore as no surprise that renewable energies are struggling to penetrate the markets.

European governments at this summit will agree to meet 20% of Europe's energy use in the year 2020 from renewable sources. This is timid. They could have gone for a higher target. And they failed to back this up with powerful measures to achieve the target and to break down this target for the various energy-related sectors such as electricity.

Without such a break-down, the wide-spread uptake of renewable energies will be weakened, slowed down, delayed – and it becomes a lot more expensive in then long-term.

What our leaders are deciding at this summit is not enough at all because, among other reasons, they also continue supporting dirty and dangerous energy.

Not least by ignoring huge market distortions that make dirty energy artificially cheap in comparison to renewables.

Billions of taxpayers' Euros will continue subsidizing the coal, oil, gas and nuclear energy industries.

Europeans will also continue paying billions of Euros every year for the health impact of air pollution from burning fossil fuels, for the damage of buildings, for the destruction of nature, for the long-term costs of nuclear waste storage and – God forbid – the lion's share of the costs of any nuclear disaster.

Today, many countries choose to remain addicted to burning coal to produce energy and some, like Germany, are planning to build new coal power plants.

Many states are clinging to nuclear power as their energy solution. France and Belgium already rely on it and politicians in countries like Sweden, Germany and the UK are contemplating reviving nuclear power. The most disturbing example is Finland, where France's Areva and Germany's Siemens are building a so-called 3rd generation nuclear power plant. It is the only nuclear plant being built in Europe today!

We believe that the nuclear path is wrong and dangerous because of the daily risk of a nuclear disaster like the one in the Ukrainian nuclear plant in Chernobyl in 1986. And where to go with all the nuclear waste? No one wants it in their backyard!

Nuclear technology for energy production also leads to the spreading of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear power is not the solution to climate change. It is extortionately expensive. The same Euro invested in energy efficiency could reduce more CO₂ emissions, by an astonishing factor of ten.

European leaders are obsessed with securing enough energy supplies – at all costs. They worry about getting their hands on yet more oil and gas, especially from Russia that has been using energy as a political weapon. And they worry about secure oil supplies from a volatile Middle East. This unease pushes European leaders to stoop so low as to make oil and gas deals with dictatorships in the Caucasus and elsewhere, compromising on core values like human rights and democracy.

If our leaders were serious about the security of energy supply, then they would be well advised to, as an example, reduce the unsustainable trends in the transport sector, which claims 70-80% of all oil imports into the EU.

But the Heads of State at this summit have barely touched this issue, pleasing car corporates. Our leaders just want to reduce dependence on oil imports from politically unstable regions . They want to build more pipelines and strike regional deals with dubious regimes. And they are planning to replace some of the dirty oil with biofuels.

But biofuels production can lead to dramatic environmental damages in producer countries, such as the destruction of rainforests and the reduction of biodiversity. It can also severely undermine the livelihoods of people, expelling them from traditional lands and increasing food prices.

What we need is a fundamental shift away from dirty fossil fuels and nuclear towards energy efficiency and renewables.

This is not happening today, despite a wide consensus that only such a shift would help us avoid the disastrous consequences of climate change on a global scale.

Do not give up. It is not too late to save our climate.

Do not give up hope that common sense will prevail.

This is why all of us are today participating in this action. To show European leaders that Europeans care about climate change.

We are all tired of governments supporting dirty and dangerous energy industries.

We want a clean and sustainable energy future.

We want our governments to

**STOP CLIMATE CHANGE,
CUT ENERGY WASTE, and
CHOOSE RENEWABLES.**

Thank you