

**Bill Gates**

November 2, 2020

Her Excellency Ursula von der Leyen  
President, European Commission  
Rue de la Loi  
BERL  
1049 Brussels

Dear President von der Leyen:

During these uncertain times, it has been a pleasure to work alongside the European Commission and the European Union in the global fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic downturn. Europe's continuous leadership in addressing some of the world's most intractable challenges is a source of hope and inspiration. Melinda and I thank you for the leadership you have shown throughout this global crisis.

Even as the world works on the tremendous task of stopping the coronavirus and then recovering from it, we also need to act now to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Against this backdrop, I wanted to let you know that I am significantly increasing my climate and energy efforts, as well as the time I commit to this issue. While the scale of the challenge is unprecedented, I am optimistic that we can make progress by building and deploying innovations to bring net global greenhouse gas emissions to zero.

As we discussed when I was last in Brussels, I am delighted that you have chosen the Green Deal – and its goal for Europe to become the first climate-neutral continent – as the cornerstone of your governing mandate. Despite the many calls by some for short-term fixes, you have stayed the course in pursuing this long-term goal that acknowledges the magnitude of the climate issue. Europe's landmark recovery package, and the commitment you made in your first State of the Union address to raise Europe's 2030 emissions reduction target to at least 55%, are critical steps forward.

And yet, while targets and plans are very important, getting to zero will be extremely difficult and will require concerted public and private action. My response to the threat of climate change has been focused on building Breakthrough Energy – a network of entities and initiatives, including investment funds, nonprofit and philanthropic programs, and policy efforts linked by a common commitment to scale the technologies we need to achieve a path to net-zero emissions by 2050.

Our flagship program will be called Breakthrough Energy Catalyst, an ambitious new initiative to catalyze the deployment of greenhouse gas reducing technologies.

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The entire program is oriented toward the goal of reducing what I call the Green Premium, or the difference in cost between a product that involves emitting carbon and an alternative that does not. We are developing a creative and sizable financing facility, funded in part by philanthropists and the private sector, to lower Green Premiums and accelerate the path to scale for the technologies that will be critical to reaching net-zero emissions. This program will jumpstart early-stage deployment and strategic demonstrations, allowing technologies to reach scale significantly faster than would otherwise be possible. We expect that Catalyst's first three priority technologies will be green hydrogen, sustainable aviation fuel, and direct air capture – all of which are closely aligned with the priorities of the Green Deal.

With public-private partnerships at the center of both Europe's Green Deal and NextGeneration EU, Catalyst could play a productive and complementary role in helping Europe consolidate its climate leadership, while also ensuring the widespread affordability and accessibility of critical clean technologies. Given the long-standing and successful partnerships in public health that we have built with the European Commission, along with our great collaboration through the pilot fund Breakthrough Energy Ventures-Europe, I am eager to explore further work together on the climate front. In that spirit, I would welcome the opportunity for a phone call soon in which I could both learn more about your plans for the green transition and introduce you in more detail to Breakthrough Energy Catalyst.

To tackle the climate challenge, it will take all of us – innovators, investors, policymakers, and citizens – to pull off the massive transformation that is needed across technology, markets, and policy. We can achieve much more when we partner and bring our collective strengths and resources together.

As always, thank you for the European Commission's outstanding leadership. Melinda and I are delighted by the opportunity to continue building upon and strengthening our partnership with you in the coming years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Gates". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Bill" and "Gates" being capitalized and prominent.

Bill Gates