Dear Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the European Commission for the Energy Union, Werner Hoyer, President of the European Investment Bank, and Suma Chakrabarti President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Re: Why Europe must turn off the gas TAP (an open letter)

We call on the European Commission to withdraw support for the 878 kilometre long Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), and on taxpayer-funded banks to refuse to finance it.

The TAP is the western leg of a chain of proposed pipelines known as the Southern Gas Corridor. Scheduled for operation from 2020, these pipelines would pump 10 billion cubic metres of gas from Azerbaijan to Europe, and 6 billion cubic metres of gas to Turkey, every year. This pipeline would destroy Europe’s climate targets, increase energy dependence on oppressive political regimes, divert billions in funding away from democratic renewable energy solutions and have unacceptable impacts on the communities in its path.

Climate implications alone mean the TAP must not go ahead. Plans for the pipeline were drawn up before the Paris Agreement was signed. Instead of rapidly reducing emissions as the Paris Agreement demands, TAP would lock Europe into fossil fuels for decades. Given that existing fossil fuel operations already exceed the carbon budget left to avoid catastrophic, irreversible changes to our climate, there is no justification for new fossil fuel infrastructure, especially on the scale of the Southern Gas Corridor.

The European Commission itself admits it hasn’t made an assessment of the climate impacts of the pipeline. The only sensible action would be to immediately freeze the European Commission’s support for the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) and other sections of the Southern Gas Corridor. It’s time public servants honoured their climate promises with appropriate actions in line with the Paris Agreement and climate justice.
This pipeline cannot be built without financial backing, and so we also call on taxpayer-funded banks who are considering investing in it -- the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) -- not to get involved. It is clear that this pipeline is unnecessary for our energy supply, as the EC's own analysis shows decreasing demand projections for gas across the region. Not only is investing in the Southern Gas Corridor against the public interest, it risks quickly becoming a stranded asset.

The EIB and EBRD are also official partners of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, set up to promote transparency and good governance in oil, gas and mining industries. In March, Azerbaijan quit this transparency initiative after being suspended due to concerns about civil society freedoms and human rights - yet another reason why it would be inappropriate for the EIB and EBRD to finance this project.

TAP would also have unjust impacts on the many communities it would pass through, including Albania, Greece and Italy. In Melendugno, the ending point of the pipeline in Italy, the local 'No TAP Committee' is clear that this is an undemocratic project, imposed by the national government, and that it will cause vast economic and irreparable environmental damage to the local area. They are rightly concerned about impacts on tourism, water quality and people's livelihoods in the olive-farming industry. When works began to uproot hundreds of ancient olive trees to make way for the pipeline, a popular movement of thousands of people organised daily non-violent actions to stop the operations, catching the attention of the Italian media. The sheer size of the protests, as well as stone barricades blocking access to the site, managed to suspend works indefinitely. If construction continues it's fair to expect more of such actions and community resistance, as people defend their rights, livelihoods and local landscapes.

We, the undersigned, call for the immediate suspension of all work associated with TAP and the Southern Gas Corridor. We urge the European Commission to re-assess its support for the pipeline, and call on the EIB and EBRD not to invest public funds in this unnecessary, unjust and financially reckless project.

Yours,

Bill McKibben, 350.org founder
Naomi Klein, activist and author of the book This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate
99 posse, Italian hip hop/reggae band
Caparezza
Florent Compain, President of Les Amis de la Terre France
Mark Fodor, Director, CEE Bankwatch Network
Johan Frijns, Director, BankTrack
Elena Gerebizza, Re:Common
Sebastien Godinot, Economist, WWF European Policy Office
Rafael Gonzalez, Dakota/Puerto Rican Water Protector
James Hansen, Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Columbia University
Wenonah Hauter, Executive Director, Food & Water Watch
Rachel Heaton, Mazaska Talks co-founder and Muckleshoot Tribal member / Duwamish descendant
Danielle Hirsch, Director, Both ENDS
Ziva Kavka Gobbo, Chairperson, Focus Association for Sustainable Development
Jeremy Leggett, Chair of Carbon Tracker Initiative & Director at Solar Century
Simon Lewis, Professor of Global Change Science, UCL
Lo Stato Sociale
Erri De Luca, Italian novelist, translator and poet
Olivier de Marcellus, Coordinator, Climat Justice Sociale
Valerio Mastrandrea, Actor, Italy
Nataani Means, Oglala Lakota/Navajo Water Protector
Luca Mercalli, President of Società Meteorologica Italiana
Kumi Naidoo, Launch Executive Director, Africans Rising
Don Pasta, writer
Alfons Pérez, Xarxa de l’Observatori del Deute en la Globalització
Tim Ratcliffe, Campaigner, 350.org
Harald Ruecker, Chair person – Bl lebenswertes Korbach e.V.
Mark Ruffalo, American actor and social activist
Anna Schoemakers, Director, Greenpeace Netherlands
Heffa Schücking, Biologist, Urgewald
Sarah Sexton, Larry Lohmann & Nicholas Hildyard – The Corner House
Sarah Shoraka, Platform London
Xavier Sol, Director, Counter Balance
Magda Stoczkiewicz, Friends of the Earth Europe
Woro Supartinah, Coordinator, Jikalahari, Indonesia
James Thornton, CEO ClientEarth
Wendel Trio, Director, Climate Action Network Europe
Treble Lu Professore, Salento-based Reggae band
Wasté Win Young, Standing Rock Lakota/Dakota Tribe citizen

2http://priceofoil.org/2016/09/22/the-skys-limit-report/
4https://www.e3g.org/news/media-room/europes-declining-gas-demand

This open letter can be found online at https://350.org/no-tap-letter-in-full/