

European leaders discuss energy security, climate

European leaders have ruled out delaying the adoption of a proposed package of climate and energy legislation, despite calls from some countries for a rethink of the plans and more widespread concerns over the current global financial crisis. President Jose Manuel Barroso says that Europe is back in the fight against climate change. "It is an illusion to believe that we can choose between resolving the financial crisis and solve climate change. The two go hand in hand," says Barroso. The European Council reaffirmed at a meeting on 15 and 16 October 2008 the objective of reaching an overall agreement on the energy-climate change package for the December European Council. On energy security, the Council adopted a series of specific guidelines to be implemented in the coming months. Key actions include improving the way European energy markets work, "in particular through greater transparency on flows and stockpiles and through sharing information on long-term requirements and resources", says a draft conclusion of the meeting. The leaders of the 27 countries want to see the EC's proposals to complete the internal gas and power markets passed into law and to speed up efforts to implement the Commission's energy efficiency action plan and its strategic energy technology plan. They also want to develop EU-wide crisis mechanisms to deal with temporary supply disruptions and strengthen critical infrastructure such as energy grids and LNG terminals. The leaders want the EU to "pursue with determination" diversified energy sources. The EC's January climate protection proposals, which include a binding target for the EU to source 20 per cent of its final energy from renewables by 2020, and to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020, will contribute directly to this diversification, the leaders say. They also want to improve European relations with energy producer and transit countries. The leaders plan to review energy security progress at their meeting in March 2009.

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