

To: Prime Minister of Estonia, Kaja Kallas; Prime Minister of Finland, Sanna Marin; Prime Minister of Latvia, Krišjānis Kariņš; President of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda

May 25, 2022

## **Joint Baltic-Finnish call to enhance regional cooperation for phasing out fossil fuels**

Dear Prime Minister Kallas,  
Dear Prime Minister Marin,  
Dear Prime Minister Kariņš,  
Dear President Nausėda,

We, the signatories of this joint letter, are writing to you ahead of the upcoming meeting of the European Council on 30-31 May in order to outline our recommendations for achieving regional independence from Russian fossil fuels and eventually, all fossil fuels.

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland have shown remarkable cooperation in foreign policy and security matters since the start of the war in Ukraine. We commend you on the efforts to set up an embargo on Russian fossil fuel imports. Considering this great potential, it is regrettable that regional coordination is lacking when it comes to planning the next steps to move away from Russian fossil fuels. The individual countries are overly focused on solely diversifying gas supplies to increase the resilience of our energy systems, while we should be joining forces to accelerate the phase-out of fossil fuels in the region.

As the regional gas market encompasses all three Baltic states and Finland, the solutions to reduce regional gas demand must be coordinated to yield a significant impact. The current situation, where Estonia, Latvia and Finland are all looking into building permanent LNG terminals, threatens creating far too much capacity for fossil gas compared to regional demand. These projects would lock the region into the costly and polluting fossil fuel for decades to come. The region cannot afford these uncoordinated efforts spearheaded by the private sector to derail the progress of the green transition. The recent [IPCC report](#) makes this more than clear: forceful additional efforts to reduce GHG emissions have to be taken immediately in order to keep the goal of the Paris agreement within reach, which would help us avoid the worst outcomes of the climate crisis.

We urge you to consider our recommendations when planning the next steps to make our region independent from Russian fossil fuels and fossil fuels in general, as well as the RePowerEU package and the ongoing implementation of the European Green Deal:

- **Support an immediate ban on Russian fossil fuels, followed by detailed action plans to phase out fossil fuels overall in a socially just manner as soon as possible, while also respecting broader environmental and biodiversity considerations.** Our region is already a frontrunner in trying to secure EU-wide support for banning Russian fossil fuels and could now lead the way in creating a joint regional plan to phase out fossil gas as well as all fossil fuel subsidies.
- **Deliver a regional assessment of the possibilities of gas sector decarbonisation** with specific numbers and expected shortages for gas demand. The assessment needs to be compliant with international obligations, such as the European Green Deal, Fit for 55 package and the Paris Agreement. To reduce the risk of building too much LNG capacity in the context of the inevitable sharp decline of gas demand due to climate goals and necessary decarbonisation, it is imperative that no permanent fossil gas infrastructure, including LNG terminals, is planned before such analysis has been compiled.

- **Prevent further fossil fuel lock-ins by providing a strict time limit to any emergency diversification of gas supplies.** Diversification should only be seen as a temporary measure until moving away from fossil fuels is achievable by means of energy savings, massive rollout of renewable energy and use of renewable gases (biogas from agricultural waste, grassland residues; renewable hydrogen) where electrification is not a feasible solution.
- **Coordinate the regional response to the changes in the energy market,** including the reality of being unable to rely on Russian gas. No stone should be left unturned to substantiate cooperation in energy and climate ambitions, including joint efforts to address supply-chain constraints, cooperation on efforts to boost circular economy concepts and decarbonisation in all sectors from research and development to joint renewable energy projects.
- **Promptly increase energy efficiency and energy savings measures and schemes,** which are the key to reducing fossil gas demand and mitigating the impact of high energy prices. Examples of that include frontloading and allocating extra funding to already existing or planned energy efficiency measures, such as building renovations, as well as reducing administrative burden and unnecessary paperwork. Some relatively fast measures include draft-proofing, installing loft and wall insulation, double glazing windows, installing smart energy management systems as well as efficient lighting systems. Studying other countries' best practices and learning from those can be useful and further boost our countries' close cooperation.
- **Support industries in reducing gas demand and energy consumption,** providing support for replacing gas with industrial heat pumps where appropriate, support for embracing more circular economic models as well as prioritising use of renewable gases such as biomethane and renewable hydrogen for the hardest to abate sectors. Easing signing power purchase agreements (PPAs) as well as accelerating the provision of necessary non-financial support is also paramount, such as new training schemes required both for the implementation of energy efficiency improvements in buildings, as well as the decarbonisation of the energy sector and industry in general.
- **Facilitate faster rollout of renewables, electrification and flexibility solutions.** This entails an array of steps, from scaling up supporting infrastructure and demand side management to incorporating more solar and wind, several of which are also mandated in the European Commission's *kaaRePowerEU* plan. Therefore, it is important to:
  - ◆ designate go-to areas for wind power with a rapid permitting process while still having respect for environmental safeguards and need to assess potential environmental impacts;
  - ◆ deploy solar PVs on the roofs of public buildings and car parks and consider mandatory PVs on all new and renovated buildings following the energy efficiency first principle;
  - ◆ support prosumer schemes, renewable energy communities and electricity sharing schemes financially and otherwise;
  - ◆ support the installation of heat pumps to replace gas boilers and connect buildings to efficient district heating in urban areas;
  - ◆ ban installation of gas boilers in newly built residential and private housing;
  - ◆ prevent intensification of forestry and avoid peat extraction for energy use;
  - ◆ support the decarbonisation of district heating via the utilisation of waste heat and industrial heat pumps;

- ◆ encourage the scale-up of proven energy storage technologies such as pumped hydro and heat storage as well as demand side flexibility to compensate for peak gas demand;
  - ◆ speed up the shift to various electro-mobility solutions and transit towards vehicle electrification.
- **Support increasing the ambition of the Fit for 55 package**, including scaling up the ambition under the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED), Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), Renewable Energy Directive (RED) and CO<sub>2</sub> standards for cars and vans.

We encourage you to be bold in your decisions on implementing the European Green Deal. The war in Ukraine gives even more urgent pressure regarding that and it would act as a firm response to the aggressor. We hope that you can take our recommendations on board at the European Council. We stand ready to support your efforts and look forward to engaging with you on this matter further on.

Yours sincerely,

## **ESTONIA**

Estonian Fund for Nature, Eestimaa Looduse Fond

Estonian Green Movement, Eesti Roheline Liikumine

Save Estonia's Forests, Päästame Eesti Metsad

Green Pärnu County, Roheline Pärnumaa

Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation, Arengukoostöö Ümarlaud

Niilusoo NGO, MTÜ Niilusoo

MTÜ Ökotark (Bioneer.ee)

Matka-Rebane OÜ

Tartu Students' Nature Conservation Circle NPO, Tartu Üliõpilaste Looduskaitsering MTÜ

Tipu Nature School NGO, MTÜ Tipu Looduskool

Estonian Environmental Education Association, Eesti Keskkonnahariduse Ühing

Birdlife Estonia, MTÜ Eesti Ornitoloogiaühing

Stockholm Environment Institute Tallinn Centre, Stockholmi Keskkonnainstituudi Tallinna Keskus

Estonian Environmental Law Center (EELC), Keskkonnaõiguse Keskus

NGO West Coastland, MTÜ Läänerannik

NGO Estonian Seminatural Grasslands Conservation Association, MTÜ Pärändkoosluste Kaitse Ühing

Baltic Environmental Forum Estonia, MTÜ Balti Keskkonnafoorum

Estonian Society for Nature Conservation, Eesti Looduskaitse Selts

Fridays for Future Estonia

## **FINLAND**

Friends of the Earth Finland, Maan ystävät

Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, Suomen luonnonsuojeluliitto ry

Greenpeace Nordic

Finnish Nature League, Luonto-Liitto ry

Creatura Think & Do Tank

Fridays For Future Finland

Protect Our Winters Finland

350 Finland

Climate Move

## **LATVIA**

Green Liberty, Zaļā brīvība

Birdlife International Latvia, Latvijas ornitoloģijas biedrība

Pasaules dabas fonds (WWF-Latvia)

Coastal Environmental Protection Society, Piekrastes vides aizsardzības biedrība

Fridays for Future Latvia

Baltic Environmental Forum Latvia, Baltijas Vides Forums

## **LITHUANIA**

Circular Economy, VšĮ "Žiedinė ekonomika"

Association Greens of Klaipeda, Asociacija Klaipėdos Žalieji

LT Greens, Susivienijimas Žali LT

Environmental Coalition of Lithuania, Aplinkosaugos koalicija

Environmental Information Center, Aplinkosaugos informacijos centras

Klaipėdian Initiative for Democracy and the Environment, Asociacija "Klaipėdiečių iniciatyva už demokratiją ir ekologiją (KIDE)"

Lithuanian Ornithological Society, Lietuvos ornitologų draugija

Labanora's Forest Club, Labanoro klubas

Center for Environmental Policy, VšĮ Aplinkos apsaugos politikos centras

For a Clean Lithuania, VšĮ "Už švarią Lietuvą"

Creative Corner 360°, Kūrybos kampas 360°

Lithuanian Fund for Nature, Lietuvos gamtos fondas

Student Scientific Society of Natural Sciences, Studentų Gamtininkų mokslinė draugija

Fridays for Future Lithuania

Extinction Rebellion Lithuania, Sukilimas prieš išnykimą

**GREENPEACE**

