

*Special Committee on the Financial, Economic and Social Crisis*

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We need climate-proof growth because we need a better quality of life and because we have to prepare for the full entry into the global economy and market of around 2-3 billion consumers.

We have to take into account the fact that climate change impacts on Europe are strongly asymmetric territorially. Climate-proof growth will therefore not occur without regional and local authorities being involved. In particular, this battle will be lost or won in the cities. 170 million people in the EU live in regions where climate impacts are particularly severe. Responses cannot be remote when droughts, floods, coastal erosion, pollution, water accessibility problems happen around the corner. Also industries which face significant cost increases due to a higher carbon price are territorially concentrated.

Taking into account this asymmetry of impacts and of capability to respond, one can say that climate change may increase existing development disparities and create new ones.

While the powers and responsibilities of regions and cities vary across nations, the everyday choices of these authorities add positively or negatively to the environment, for example, regarding decisions on the use of clean technologies; on heating buildings; on public sector purchasing policies; on dealing with growing waste; on providing urban and rural transport; or on land use planning.

So let me once more emphasise that notwithstanding the self-evident need for national strategies and concerted action at the European and global level, I do believe that the local level matters very strongly when it comes to combating climate change, and in particular when it comes to the causes of climate change. Local and regional budgets have to reflect the agreed priorities.

