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Von der Leyen takes step forward, but crucial change of course remains unclear

State of the Europe

Today, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen has just delivered her annual State of the European Union address to MEPs in Strasbourg.

Bas Eickhout MEP, Greens/EFA Group President, comments:

“After a painful summer, in which it became even clearer that Europe's security, economy and democracy are under pressure, President von der Leyen must come up with ambitious and concrete proposals. If Europe continues on the same footing, it will become more vulnerable to blackmail and humiliation. President von der Leyen spoke of leadership and much-needed change with ‘Europe's Independence Moment’, but it remains to be seen to what extent these words will be translated into effective plans.

“This summer reminded us again just how vulnerable the European continent is to the devastating effects of climate change. Climate fires sweep across our continent every summer and floods wash away our entire neighbourhoods. The sad reality is that we need to build resilience to climate disasters.

“Resilience means investing in clean industry and green jobs, increasing our competitiveness and leading the world in decarbonisation and innovation. However, what the Commission has been doing so far on competitiveness is mostly just deregulation under the guise of simplification.

“European leadership means more action on climate, joint investments in the economy and credible moral leadership in the Middle East. We welcome that von der Leyen is finally going to take action on the war in Gaza. But it is far too late and much more needs to be done, such as completely terminating the EU-Israel Association Agreement, imposing an arms embargo and stopping products originating in illegal settlements from reaching the EU market.”

Terry Reintke MEP, Greens/EFA Group President, comments:

“For a truly strong Europe, free from the pressure of fossil-loving autocrats and tech oligarchs, we need to build resilience across the board. We heard a message of modest change in today's speech, now we need to see its implementation.

“The EU gave far too much ground to Trump with the US trade deal. The 750 bln energy deal will make our economy a puppet of Trump, trading our dependency on Russia to the next fossil regime. The EU needs a digital tax to reign in the tech oligarchs and ensure greater fairness in the tax system, as well to create a stable source of own resources for the Union. We must stand up to the tech bros and US pressure who want to sacrifice European protection from digital hate speech and fake news, just to raise their own profits. We don’t want any Trump in our EU laws. The Commission must stand firm on its promise made today.

“President Von der Leyen spoke well on security, and a fair peace in Ukraine and taking major steps in defence, which we strongly support, especially as Russian drones are now breaching EU airspace. However, security is broader than defence alone. We welcome the focus on Europe’s production, we urgently have to build an independent European alternative to US capabilities. The Commission must now push this hard against resistances in EU capitals.

“The only way to bring jobs back to Europe is to have a credible, innovative, green economy where investments are being done, where we are investing in our workforce and making sure that the European money also stays in Europe and is invested in Europe. We welcome the announcement on European lead markets, they have to be built urgently to make the European clean industrial deal a reality. We will hold the Commission to account on its promises made today.”

More:

In October, the European Commission will present its work programme for the rest of the year. This will be a crucial moment to assess to what extent the plans announced today will be translated into action.

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