Brussels, 1st December 2021

EERA Statement on the UN Climate Conference of the Parties 26 (COP 26)

The UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties 26 (COP26) took place in Glasgow, Scotland, from 31 October to 12 November 2021. Over 190 countries finalised negotiations on 13 November by adopting the Glasgow Climate Pact. While all participating nations agreed to keep the 1.5 degrees Celsius scenario alive and revisit and strengthen their current emissions targets to 2030, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), there is a misalignment between this declaration and their commitment levels. Addressing this fracture will be a crucial goal in the following years. Starting from COP27, this will be combined with a yearly political roundtable to consider a global progress report, culminating in a Leaders summit in 2023. Against this background, the European Energy Research Alliance (EERA) wishes to put forward its position on the outcome of the agreement based on its most recent work compiled in a White Paper on the Clean Energy Transition.

General considerations

As the largest community of researchers in low carbon energy in Europe, EERA acknowledges the Glasgow Pact, which managed to keep the Paris goals alive. However, it regrets that **the world remains far off track and that the submitted country commitments are not in line with this scenario**, fundamentally weakening its solidity. The most optimistic global temperature predictions only hold under the favourable condition that countries promptly deliver on the pledges made at COP26 and to their fullest extent. **It is therefore of utmost importance to keep on working for aligning the Paris agreement goal with scenarios that are credible and underpinned by concrete action.**

Another point regards the **future of coal**. The final text agreed on action on coal "phase down" instead of "phase out". However, this development must not be understated, as **it represents the first time in the history of COPs that *coal* and *fossil fuel subsidies* are explicitly addressed in an agreement text**.

Methane emissions were an additional field of discussion. **The increased participation of countries in the Global Methane Pledge**, an initiative launched by the US in partnership with the EU and signed by over 100 countries, **sent a powerful signal** regarding the pressing matter of reducing methane emissions.

The negotiations in Glasgow also led to the adoption of the **Paris Agreement rulebook**, i.e., the guidelines for the countries on how the Paris Agreement must be delivered. The rulebook **includes an accord on article 6, covering the ways governments can work together to generate deeper emission reductions and produce more ambitious national climate action plans** to the Paris Agreement. EERA considers the deal on this article a significant achievement for the credibility of multilateral processes.

Concrete implications of the COP26 agreement on low carbon energy research

The COP26 agreements and subsequent policy actions should prompt a dramatic scale-up of investments in research and innovation (R&I) across multiple sectors and activities. The current levels are insufficient to

address the challenges outlined throughout the conference, and all countries are called to push for a strengthening of their research activities[1]. According to EERA, **the efforts must be directed to both the deployment of technologies available today and the development of research focused on new, breakthrough technology concepts**. In this sense, funding across the entire Technology Readiness Level (TRL) scale will be vital to ensuring sustainable innovation processes, which is crucial for containing global temperatures within the limits set by the Paris Agreement. This means that governments must invest in high-TRL R&I technologies to help bring them to a competitive level, while also provide clear market signals to accelerate divestment of carbon-intensive assets and significantly boost the deployment of both competitive and pre-competitive low-carbon technologies[2]. These efforts should be conducted across various technologies, from renewable energy to greenhouse gas removal technologies.

Similarly, **it is crucial to broaden the focus of R&I activities from mitigation to include climate adaptation challenges**. Mitigation currently represents the main goal for developed economies that are in a situation where such strategies can be supported by own funds and are generally experiencing less climate change impacts. However, adaptation research is equally fundamental as the consequences of the climate crisis are already affecting people's livelihood globally. As the IEA puts it, a *"people-centred approach to the clean energy transitions"* implies active citizens' engagement in science and research activities and is essential if the transition is to happen. In this regard, the inclusion of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) in the clean energy transition's agenda is critical. Themes like energy democracy, social acceptance and the transformation of energy production and consumption patterns have a tremendous potential to unlock further developments in climate action for the near future, promoting just and fair transition pathways.

However, zeroing emissions by 2050 in a context of continued increasing global emissions demands **greater international cooperation in R&I**, a notable absentee at COP26, but a key element in the path to carbon neutrality. Already highlighted by IEA in its Net Zero by 2050 Roadmap, EERA has strongly called policymakers to foster collaboration, specifically in a context where the EU accounts for just under 9% of global emissions.

Finally, EERA promotes a **holistic approach towards the clean energy transition**[3], one of the most effective instruments at the globe's disposal to tackle climate change in a profound way, and the development of strong links between environmental, technological, social and economic systems. Otherwise, the agreements signed at COP26 and other successive resolutions regarding the climate crisis will not deliver the required systemic transformation needed to face the biggest challenge of our time.

Concluding remarks

Even if the COP26 final agreement represented a small step towards a cleaner and more environmentally sustainable planet, **the progress made falls short of commitments that would have been consistent with the targets of the Paris Agreement and further compromises the chances of reaching them**. Furthermore, they could be hampered if not accompanied by concrete actions. Now more than ever, it is urgent that parties

[1] EERA White Paper on the Clean Energy Transition: https://mailchi.mp/eera-set/clean-energy-transition
[2] EERA White Paper on the Clean Energy Transition: https://mailchi.mp/eera-set/clean-energy-transition
[3] EERA White Paper on the Clean Energy Transition: https://mailchi.mp/eera-set/clean-energy-transition

take stock of the emergency of addressing climate change and the existential threat it represents for our society. **They urgently need to deliver against their historical responsibility by scaling up the ambitions of their pledges through the NDCs and translating them into concrete and measurable actions**.

Next year's meeting in Egypt will be again a pivotal moment, and the worlds' eyes will be once again focused on leaders' negotiations. Besides, this moment will be critical to seek alignment and consistency with the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. **In this sense, COP27 could be the first concrete proof of the nations' intentions to radically tackle the climate crisis or to privilege the status quo business as usual**. It may seem as the saying *"we are running out of time"* is becoming commonplace, but we are. And **low carbon energy research can offer some of the tools to make of this window of opportunity a game-changing breakthrough**. It is about time to turn on the clean energy transition, with its undoubtful gains for the planet, citizens' well-being, and the entire economy.