



Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

4th February 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

Just nine months remain before the UK hosts COP26 in Glasgow. COP26 is expected to be the largest UN Climate Summit ever held, and the largest Summit that the UK has ever hosted. The agenda for this year is the most critical since the Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015: it is the first year that countries are being asked to increase the ambition of their pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions. An event of this scale, and with such great ambitions, will necessarily require huge efforts to prepare. But the UK is running out of time to rally international commitments to emissions reductions that can bridge the gap between current projections for greenhouse gas emissions, and the emissions cuts that are needed to ensure that current and future generations can prosper on our planet.

The timescales to prepare for this year's Summit are particularly tight. The UK was only awarded its position as host – in partnership with Italy – in September 2019, some 14 months ahead of the event's scheduled opening in November. Other countries have taken much longer to organise previous Climate Summits; the French Government spent three years preparing for COP21, substantially strengthening diplomatic relations and global support for aims that would become central to the Paris Agreement.

The dismissal of Claire O'Neill as COP President has created disruption and distraction at the highest level of the COP26 team. Today's launch of COP26 should have been an opportunity to engage the public on the UK's new role in global leadership for the net zero agenda. If the UK is to have any hope of delivering a successful Summit - in particular in bringing together a new and more ambitious set of international carbon reduction commitments - then a new President must be appointed as a matter of urgency.

With the Government's focus to 'unite and level up' the UK, COP26 is also a major opportunity to bring the nations of the UK together. It is key that the UK and Scottish Governments work together to make COP26 a success.

The Committee on Climate Change highlighted last year that the Government needs to put in place a coherent national policy package to deliver net zero well ahead of the Summit, if it is to be an effective host and an influential climate leader. At present the UK is not on track to deliver its 2050 net zero target, nor is existing policy sufficient to meet our Carbon Budgets for 2023-2032.

The BEIS Committee in the previous Parliament played a key role in delivering the legislation for the UK's net zero target. As a matter of priority, I will be inviting the new Committee to begin detailed and rigorous scrutiny of the COP process. The UK cannot afford to waste this crucial opportunity to secure progress in order to deliver on the aims of this target – to ensure the world limits global heating to no

more than 2°C, and to aim for 1.5°C. I would appreciate an early response to the following questions so that this urgent work can progress without delay.

1. Can you confirm who will be taking forward the role of COP26 President? What qualities will you be seeking when making this key appointment?
2. Which Department will be responsible and accountable for COP26 actions? How will you ensure that the Department is able to drive forward plans across the Whitehall machinery?
3. What assurances can you provide that you will not cause further disruption to the COP process?
4. Will you be endorsing and pushing ahead with Claire O'Neill's seven-point Action Plan for COP26?
5. How you are involving Scotland – and the other devolved nations – in the COP process? Can you detail what role the Scottish First Minister will be offered in the run up to and during COP26?
6. Why hasn't there been a single climate cabinet meeting since the COP Delivery Unit was set up?
7. When will the first Cabinet sub-committee on climate take place?

Yours,

Rachel Reeves

Rachel Reeves MP

Chair-elect of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee