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Polish Climate Coalition's Position on the Necessity to Resign from Coal Burning by 2030

Based on the results of scientific research and on the conviction that our generation has the moral and ethical responsibility to future generations, **the Polish Climate Coalition calls on Polish politicians of all political factions to take decisive steps to stop coal-fired power generation in Poland by 2030.**

Polish scientists and researchers point out that it is necessary to stop burning coal in power plants. On 10 December 2018, representatives of the Polish Academy of Sciences together with the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the French Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique adopted a Memorandum of Understanding calling for the abandonment of coal combustion by 2030 at the latest, an example to follow for many countries dependent on fossil fuels. According to the authors of the document, resigning from coal is a step of great importance, paving the way for climate security and the future of our society. As the signatories of the Memorandum declared, if we do not stop climate change *"...human development will be thwarted and the use of fossil fuels, which has largely enabled it, will become our curse. We cannot allow this to happen. ..."*¹

There are many reasons to abandon coal already by 2030. The Polish Climate Coalition considers the following reasons to be the most important:

1. The results of a study conducted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and published in October 2018 in a special report indicate that it is still possible to halt the increase in the Earth's average temperature at the level of 1.5⁰C. However, this requires a rapid and far-reaching transformation of all sectors of the economy, starting with the energy sector. Without a radical reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from anthropogenic sources by 2030, it will not be possible to halt climate change.
2. The effects of climate change pose a threat to the health and lives of Poles. Hurricane force winds, violent storms, flash floods and increasingly frequent heat waves cause premature deaths of hundreds of citizens of our country every year. Moreover, exposure to vector-borne and tropical diseases is on the rise. Between 2005 and 2015 alone the number of new cases of Lyme disease in Poland increased threefold.² Pregnant women and children are the most vulnerable to the negative health effects of climate change. It is estimated that almost 88% of all climate-related diseases occur in children under 5 years of age.³

¹ https://informacje.pan.pl/images/cop24media/Memorandum_katowickie-polDS.pdf

² [Koalicja Klimatyczna, Wpływ zmiany klimatu na zdrowie \(How Climate Impacts Health\), source:](#)

http://koalicjaklimatyczna.org/theme/UploadFiles/Wplyw_zmiany_klimatu_na_zdrowie_ost2.pdf, za NIZP-PZH

³ Ibid.



3. Almost 40% of Polish greenhouse gas emissions are caused by coal-fired power plants. Every tenth tonne of carbon dioxide emitted in our country comes from one source – the Belchatow power plant, which is the second largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world. Poland's energy industry is Europe's second largest in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. If Poland's energy sector were to be based on alternative technologies, primarily renewable technologies which are already available commercially, it would improve our energy efficiency and make it possible to reduce Poland's carbon footprint as well as making a significant contribution to ensuring a safer life for generations of young Poles.
4. The dependence of the Polish economy on coal mining and burning leads not only to greenhouse gas emissions, but also to polluting air with other substances including particulate matter, sulphur and nitrogen oxides, heavy metals, hydrocarbons and other persistent organic pollutants. As the results of analyses conducted by the European Environment Agency show, poor air quality in Poland leads to premature deaths of almost 50,000 Poles every year. According to the World Bank, the external costs of air pollution in Poland amount to PLN 110-150 billion annually, which constitutes 6.4% to 8.3% of the country's GDP, i.e. 2-3 per cent more than the contribution of mining and quarrying industry to Poland's GDP. Mass-scale coal burning for heating homes is a uniquely Polish feature among all European countries, and a direct consequence of the dependence of the energy and mining sector on coal.
5. Negative effects of climate change also pose an increasingly serious threat to Poland's food security. An earlier start of the vegetation period causes a greater risk of damage caused by ground frost in late spring which affects many crops. Since the beginning of the 21st century we have been witnessing an almost permanent summer drought in Poland, but the year 2018 was particularly severe in this respect; such an extreme drought had not occurred in Poland at least since the end of World War II. New diseases and pests are emerging: the first outbreak of bluetongue disease in cattle has been reported, and the European corn borer is capable of destroying up to 80% of maize crops.
6. Postponing the necessary reforms makes it necessary to transfer funds to the mining and coal-based energy sectors in order to avoid social unrest. The energy industry dependent on coal is becoming a burden for the Polish economy and society. In the years 1990-2016, public subsidies for coal mining amounted to approximately PLN 230 billion, i.e. approximately PLN 8.5 billion annually. If this trend continues until 2030, further support measures amounting to PLN 155 billion will need to be applied. It is estimated that from 1990 to 2016, coal-based power industry generated external costs amounting to PLN 0.8-2.6 trillion. This amount could have been spent on health care, which, in turn, would have improved both the health of the population and its ability to work and learn. In total, the subsidies and external costs from the 27-year-long period cost every Pole over PLN 1,900 per year, a significant proportion of a household budget.
7. Using coal for power generation results in an increase in Poland's dependence on imports as the cost of its coal mining in Poland are high. In 2018, imports of hard coal to Poland amounted to 19.68 million tonnes, with most of the fossil fuel imported from Russia – 13.47 million tonnes. Therefore, the Polish economy remains dependent on major



imports from Russia: not only gas and oil, but also hard coal. Poland's budgetary resources, instead of being used to import fossil fuels, should be used to invest in improving the economy's overall energy efficiency and developing renewable energy sources.

8. The tendency to resign from coal is visibly intensifying worldwide. Out of 28 EU member states, 26 countries have declared that they will not invest in coal-fired power generation after 2020, and the declaration does not only pertain to building new plants but encompasses all investments. Only Greece and Poland have not made the pledge. Similar decisions are being taken by financial institutions: by mid-2018, 19 large banks had stopped lending money to new mines and 16 are no longer financing new coal-fired power stations. These include ING, Deutsche Bank, Commerzbank, Société Générale, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and HSBC. Large pension funds have followed suit, such as the state-owned Norges Bank Investment Management, the largest pension fund in Norway. In addition, 40 organisations and entities associated with the Catholic Church have declared that they will no longer invest in fossil fuels, including coal.
9. The current global energy trends clearly indicate a very strong decarbonisation of the power industry. The cost of photovoltaics and wind turbines is comparable to the cost of building new large coal and gas-fired power plants. Moreover, energy storage costs are expected to be falling dramatically. By 2050, the cost of an average photovoltaic power plant and wind turbine farm will have fallen by 71% and 58%, respectively. It is estimated that due to lower costs (including costs of storage), the share of renewable energy sources (RES) in the European power mix will reach 87% in the middle of the 21st century, with wind and solar playing the dominant role.
10. An alternative to coal is available on the market today – it is the construction of renewable energy sources capable of supplying Poland with 100% renewable energy by 2050, along with the construction of a cost-efficient and innovative economy resistant to the challenges of the 21st century.

A shift away from coal requires a fair transformation of the areas historically dependent on coal mining and coal-fired power generation. Already today, mining regions and coal companies in Bełchatów (Łódzkie Voivodship), Turoszów (Dolnośląskie Voivodship) and in Silesia should, following the example of the eastern parts of Wielkopolskie Voivodship and ZE PAK (the Konin mining area), join the process of energy transformation supported by the EU within the framework of the Coal and Carbon-Intensive Regions in Transition Platform as well as the EU's climate and energy policy. Political parties and civil society organisations ought to support this process.

A scenario of withdrawal from coal can materialise only if there is social consent to implement it. This is particularly true of coal-intensive regions in the Łódzkie, Wielkopolskie, Dolnośląskie and Śląskie Voivodships. A fair energy transformation of the sensitive regions and elimination of energy poverty of Poles must include all stakeholders and public support for the development of economical, renewable and decentralised alternatives. This also applies to the



use of EU funds, e.g. from the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund established for this purpose.

The Climate Coalition is an association of 24 NGOs. Its mission is to work together to prevent man-made climate change for the benefit of people and the environment. More information about the Coalition is available at <http://koalicjaklimatyczna.org>

Fundacja Aeris Futuro, CIWF Polska, Fundacja ClientEarth – Prawnicy dla Ziemi, Fundacja Efektywnego Wykorzystania Energii, Fundacja Ekologiczna Arka, Fundacja Ekologiczna Ziemi Legnickiej Zielona Akcja, Fundacja EkoRozwoju FER, Fundacja GAP Polska, Fundacja Greenpeace Polska, Fundacja Na Rzecz Zrównoważonego Rozwoju, Instytut na rzecz Ekorozwoju, Klub Gaja, Liga Ochrony Przyrody, Dolnośląski Klub Ekologiczny, Polski Klub Ekologiczny Koło Tychy, Polski Klub Ekologiczny Okręg Mazowiecki, Polski Klub Ekologiczny Okręg Wschodnio-Pomorski, Pracownia na rzecz Wszystkich Istot, Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczne Eko-Unia, Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczno-Kulturalne „Wspólna Ziemia”, Społeczny Instytut Ekologiczny, WWF Polska, Zielone Mazowsze, Związek Stowarzyszeń Polska Zielona Sieć.



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