

**Joint Master in EU Trade and
Climate Diplomacy**

**EXAMINING THE ROLE OF THE
EUROPEAN UNION IN
SUPPORTING CLIMATE ACTION
IN THIRD COUNTRIES UNDER
THE PARIS AGREEMENT**

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP AND ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that I have composed the present thesis autonomously and without use of any other than the cited sources or means. I have indicated parts that were taken out of published or unpublished work correctly and in a verifiable manner through a quotation. I further assure that I have not presented this thesis to any other institute or university for evaluation and that it has not been published before.

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Abstract: The present research paper examines the role of the European Union as a leadiator in advancing global climate action through the illustrative examples of the Ministerial on Climate Action (MoCA), Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs), and the coordination of climate financial instruments. Drawing on a comprehensive literature review and analysis of primary sources, the study explores how the EU has navigated the complex landscape of international climate governance, addressing the challenges posed by the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement and the rise of emerging economies with differing climate ambitions. The findings reveal that the EU has embraced a transformative approach, evolving from a traditional leadership role to a '*leadicator in action*', actively engaging with third countries to drive tangible climate actions. Overall, the study highlights the importance of adaptive leadership, as well as proactive and tailored engagement in driving comprehensive and sustainable climate actions. The findings of this thesis provide a foundation for further academic research and exploration of the evolving role of the EU as a *leadicator* in global climate governance.

Keywords: *European Union, Leadicator, Global Climate Action, Ministerial on Climate Action, Just Energy Transition Partnerships, Climate financial instruments.*

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I. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COP	Conference of Parties
DG CLIMA	Directorate-General for Climate Action
EEA	European Environment Agency
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFSD+	European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus
EU	European Union
EVP	Executive Vice-President
GCCA+	Global Climate Change Alliance Plus
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GHGs	Greenhouse gases
IPG	International Public Group
JETP	Just Energy Transition Partnership
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MoCA	Ministerial on Climate Action
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NDICI	Global Europe: Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

II. INTRODUCTION

Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges of our time, posing significant threats to human beings and our planet globally. Rising extreme temperatures, strong rains and droughts, food security threats and the consequential need to abandon entire regions present a reality that demands immediate attention and collective action.

In order to fight against it, the European Union stands at the frontline of climate action leadership, being an active participant in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since its creation in 1992. As noted by scholars Frauke Ohler and Tom Delreux (2021), the EU role in the climate debates has been widely acknowledged as “highly ambitious, active and influential” by advocating for strong and effective climate action measures. Much of the literature has focused on the EU’s *leadiorship* role under the Paris Agreement, in which the EU provides political steering and guides the global response to the urgent threat of climate change (European Union, 2022).

Nevertheless, no such theoretical framework has focused on the role of the EU in fostering implementation after the negotiations and transforming climate ambitions into concrete action. The absence of such theoretical framework on the EU’s *leadiorship* role in this context limits our insight into the specific mechanisms and instruments by which the EU can effectively contribute to meet the climate targets into practical measures.

As such, this research paper aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the EU’s *leadiorship* role in global climate governance by examining its efforts to support third countries in incorporating the Paris Agreement into their policymaking processes. The European Union has extended its leadership beyond the multilateral negotiations in the UNFCCC and is contributing to third countries’ climate action endeavours. By shedding light on the EU’s actions in this area, this paper underscores the importance of the Union’s leadership role in political engagements, partnerships, and multilateral cooperation in increasing global mitigation and adaptation efforts to climate change.

Specifically, the present paper seeks to answer the research question of how the EU is supporting third countries' climate action under the Paris Agreement from 2015 to 2023. To achieve this aim, the paper is structured into 4 main sections: Firstly, a literature review will serve as a theoretical framework on EU's role in climate diplomacy to better understand the engagement power that the EU has in third countries; Secondly, a detailed account of the methodology employed to address the research question will be presented; Thirdly, three illustrative examples of the EU's efforts to engage with third countries, each highlighting a distinct facet of the EU approach, will be introduced and evaluated for its effectiveness in achieving the stated goals. Those three examples consist of: 1. the political engagement of the EU with other parties within the Ministerial on Climate Action (MoCA); 2. the Just Energy Transition Partnerships with Indonesia, Vietnam, and South Africa; and 3. European cooperation and financial aid to provide the necessary resources to support developing countries in their undertaking of climate-related projects and initiatives. Lastly, conclusions will be drawn on the basis of the previous analysis, contributing to a deeper understanding of the EU's role in promoting climate action on a global scale.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter offers a comprehensive literature review that examines the role of the EU from two distinct perspectives. Firstly, it provides a theoretical framework that explores the historical role of the EU as a *leadiator* in supporting the UNFCCC's negotiations and its associated challenges. Secondly, it analyses a range of publications, practitioner work and primary sources to address the limited scholarly research on the EU's role as a '*leadiator in action*'. Specifically, this section focuses on the role that adopts the EU for the implementation of climate commitments under the Paris Agreement.

By analysing the EU's past roles, positions and strategies withing the UNFCCC, the review facilitates the identification of patterns, successes and challenges in the EU's role as a '*leadiator in action*' to advance climate action. Additionally, an evaluation of the EU's leadership by example and proper EU climate diplomacy mechanisms used to advance climate action allows for an assessment of the EU's *leadiator in action* role.

However, it is important to note the limitations of the literature review, namely the scarcity of scholarly work analysing the tangible actions undertaken by the EU as a '*leadiator in action*' following decisions and commitments made at UNFCCC meetings. As such, the literature used in the second section primarily relies on primary sources, including the official website of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Council's conclusions, which provide insights into the EU's climate diplomacy, and first-hand accounts of the EU's stance, actions, and priorities in engaging with partner countries worldwide. These knowledge gaps form the basis for justifying this research paper and provide the opportunity for academic discourse on the EU's role as a *leadiator in action*, as well as the development of evidence-based policy recommendations for the EU's future engagement with third countries.

In order to keep the study the most up-to-date as possible, the literature used is mainly not older than 4 years (from 2019), with some exceptions such as the Bäckstrand & Elgström's paper (2013), which includes the definition of the EU as a *leadiator*, mentioned in more recent literature.

3.1 The role of the EU in supporting UNFCCC's climate ambitions

Although the historical period from the Paris Agreement until now, 2023, may seem short, there are still numerous publications, especially academic journals and research articles drawn upon the role that the EU had adopted in UNFCCC's sessions. Concrete key studies on the matter have been, thus, reviewed and used for the present research paper.

3.1.1 *From leader to 'leadicator'*

The paper by Bäckstrand and Elgström (2013) titled "The EU's role in climate change negotiations: from leader to leadicator" explores the evolving role of the European Union (EU) in international climate change negotiations. According to their research, since the beginning of climate international meetings, the EU has advocated for "effective multilateralism" and supported the UN system in fighting against climate change.

However, the authors contend that the EU faced some complications regarding its role as a leader in the COP15 held in Copenhagen (2009), due to its unrealistic expectations, its strong normative agenda and not leaving room for any unilateral concessions.

In that sense, during the COP 17 held in Durban (2011), the Union adopted a new role as a *leadicator* (a leader-cum-mediator) capable of engaging in both leadership and negotiation strategies simultaneously, adapting its role to changing circumstances and shifting power dynamics. This allowed the European Union to:

- Forge a bridge-building relationship with the US and the BASIC¹ countries to reach potential agreements.
- Reach out to developing countries that shared its ambition for a comprehensive, legally binding and universal regime, that would also apply to the main polluters, to revive the multilateral process.

According to more recent literature (e.g., Oberthür & Dupont, 2021; Ohler & Delreux, 2021; Kreienkamp & *et al*, 2022), the EU's role development in UNFCCC's sessions has been seen as more efficient and effective since Durban, as well as climate action has gained global relevance, despite some ongoing events, such as the refugee crisis, Brexit,

¹ Brazil, South Africa, India and China.

the covid-19 pandemic, or the war in Ukraine. Indeed, by proactively expanding its domestic climate policy by, for instance, the European Green Deal, the EU has been able to successfully fill an early credibility gap (Oberthür & Dupont, 2021). Moreover, the *leadior* strategy has enabled the EU to face the rise of developing powers and the resulting stronger multipolarity, in particular with the “US and China constituting two privileged poles” (Oberthür & Dupont, 2021).

3.1.2 Challenges in EU climate ‘leadiorship’

As aforementioned, geopolitics has become a concern with regard to climate change negotiations, which have gradually merged into geopolitical rivalry and shifted into the category of “grand strategy” (Oberthür & Dupont, 2021).

Indeed, due to the origin of so many international regimes, global climate governance is defined by Elinor Ostrom (2010), and many other scholars afterwards (e.g. Jordan et al, 2018) as *polycentric*. This trend has affected EU strategies, which has been involved in not only multilateral but also bilateral environments (Oberthür & Dupont, 2021). For instance, in COP27 the European Union signed partnerships with Kazakhstan and Namibia on raw materials and renewable hydrogen after some “difficult talks and avoiding a breaking down of the UNFCCC”². In order to keep “advancing effective *polycentric* engagement” with other parties of the UNFCCC, it requires to continue making efforts and face the “persisting high demand for international climate leadership” (Oberthür & Dupont, 2021).

To conclude, according to the quoted literature, effective *leadiorship* requires regularly reviewing positions and identifying opportunities and needs for coalition and bridge-building, as well as deploying support. Furthermore, in line with the European green Deal’s vision, the EU has the potential to enhance its domestic climate policy, which can strengthen its regulatory and market capabilities and improve its low-emission capacities for maximum global influence. This will be discussed in the following section.

² Von der Leyen, November 21st 2022. Source: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_7064

3.2 The EU's '*leadiatorship in action*' to advance global climate implementation

According to Artur Runge-Metzger (2021), Director in DG CLIMA of the European Commission, “the EU’s climate diplomacy efforts go well beyond influencing the UN climate negotiations. More and more, EU climate diplomacy aims to mobilise tangible international climate action”³.

This section will introduce relevant literature that provides an insight into the EU’s leadership by example and will explore the EU’s active engagement as a *leadiator in action* in implementing global climate commitments through various initiatives and instruments.

3.2.1 *Leading by example: the EU’s domestic climate policy*

In the realm of European domestic climate policy, a steady and consistent progression has been observed since the 1990s⁴ (Delbeke & Vis, 2019): The European Union has achieved a remarkable reduction of 24% in its greenhouse gas emissions, all while experiencing a significant increase of approximately 60% in its GDP (EEA, 2020). This evolution is characterized not only by the proliferation of policies but also by their improved effectiveness, driven by accumulated experience and increasingly ambitious objectives (Delbeke & Vis, 2021). Moreover, the integration of policy instruments has been fortified, and mechanisms have been established to diligently track and assess performance in terms of achieved outcomes (Delbeke & Vis, 2021).

In December 2019, the European Commission, under the leadership of President Ursula von der Leyen, presented the European Green Deal, a comprehensive plan outlining measures aimed at attaining climate-neutrality. These recent advancements exemplify the European Union's strengthened dedication to the objectives of the Paris Agreement, affirming its commitment to combatting climate change. Consequently, these developments indicate, according to Bocse’s research (2020), that the EU will sustain its active involvement in climate-related initiatives and aspire to maintain its position as a frontrunner in global climate leadership.

³ Runge-Metzger, A. (2021). Key Strands of EU Climate Diplomacy: Past Performance and New Opportunities. *EAERE Magazine*, 13.

⁴ 1990 serves as the base year, when the UN’s endeavors to combat climate change were initiated (Delbeke & Vis, 2021).

Sharing its extensive policy experience with other countries globally is of crucial importance, since the EU's climate policies serve as an example for effective climate change mitigation and adaptation (Delbeke & Vis, 2021). The urgency of addressing climate change needs collaborative efforts and the EU can offer valuable insights, lessons learned and best practices to assist other countries in formulating and implementing policies that are in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

3.2.2 *The EU's 'lead actor in action' role*

Given that negotiation activities relating to international climate policy have expanded beyond the confines of the traditionally important UNFCCC, EU climate diplomacy has extended its climate diplomacy efforts to encompass other forums since 2011 (Earsom & Delreux, 2021). Since the ratification of the Paris Agreement, the Union's climate diplomacy has shifted in focus from "regime-building" to facilitating the implementation of climate commitments and actions (Biedenkopf & Petri, 2021).

Following the elaboration in the scholarly work by Earsom and Delreux (2021), EU climate diplomacy can be delineated into two distinct but interconnected spheres: engagement in multilateral settings, as explored by Torenny and Cross (2018), and bilateral outreach to third countries (Biedenkopf & Petri, 2019): By participating in UNFCCC's discussions, the EU contributes to the development of common strategies and targets aimed at addressing the urgent challenge of climate change, whereas in bilateral relations with non-EU countries the EU establishes collaborations and partnerships to foster climate action and sustainable development.

In March 2023, the Council's conclusions reaffirmed the core component that EU climate and energy diplomacy suppose for the EU's foreign policy⁵. By emphasizing the importance of climate diplomacy, the EU acknowledges the crucial role of international cooperation and engagement in addressing climate change and achieving its foreign policy objectives.

Along with the statement made by the EEAS (2021), fighting climate change requires continuous political and diplomatic efforts at a global level, with a particular focus on the

⁵ Council of the European Union Conclusions of 9 March 2023, Council conclusions on Climate and Energy Diplomacy [document number: 7248/23].

G20 countries, who are responsible for almost 80% of global emissions. Using its foreign policy instruments, including policy dialogues, high ambition alliances and partnerships, international negotiations and financial instruments, the EU aims to advance the climate change agenda and promote its implementation in partner countries. Some of the areas of engagement mentioned by the EEAS are:

- The UNFCCC and other international fora, such as the G7, the G20, the Forest and Climate Leaders Partnership, or the Ministerial on Climate Action (MoCA).
- Just Energy Transition Partnerships.
- “[...] Finance to support developing countries and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in their efforts to tackle and adapt to climate change” (EEAS, 2021).

In this context, the Council highlighted in its 2023 conclusions the need to “urge third countries to intensify their efforts alongside the EU and support them in their endeavours through all EU external policy instruments”, as well as having EU Climate and Energy Diplomacy “as a political priority”⁶.

In relation to the bilateral partnerships, the Council recognised its preparedness to coordinate and establish partnerships with third countries in line with the EU climate diplomacy priorities⁷. Concretely, the Council stated that it “will also continue to support just transitions towards climate neutral and resilient economies and societies, in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda [...]”, also underlying “the importance of a strong rules-based multilateral approach, with the UN at its core, to successfully address these [climate and energy] global challenges”⁸.

Moreover, “sustainable financial instruments” were also mentioned in 2020 Council Conclusions as an EU’s external policy instrument to continue acting as “a constructive but also an assertive partner”⁹. As mentioned in the 2023 Council Conclusions, “the EU – including its Member States and the European Investment Bank (EIB) – is the biggest

⁶ Council of the European Union Conclusions of 9 March 2023, Council conclusions on Climate and Energy Diplomacy [document number: 7248/23].

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ Council of the European Union Conclusions of 20 January 2020, Council conclusions on Climate Diplomacy [document number: 5033/20].

contributor of public climate finance worldwide, and remains fully committed to [...] support climate action in developing countries [...]"

In conclusion, the role of the EU as a *leader* is not limited to shaping ambitions within the UNFCCC framework, but also extends to taking concrete actions under the Paris Agreement through alternative mechanisms. Section 3.2 of this literature review explores the EU's active engagement and leadership in implementing climate commitments, including initiatives such as the co-convention of MoCA, Just Energy Transition Partnerships or climate finance support, which have been covered extensively by practitioners and primary sources but remain relatively understudied by scholars. Yet, the chosen sources reflect the comprehensive and multifaced approach of the European Union towards climate action, also providing some of the areas of engagement that will be used as a representative example of EU's actions in the present research paper.

In the next chapter, the methodology employed to examine such specific policies, instruments and financial mechanisms of the Union will be outlined.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in the present paper encompassed several key elements, including the research design, methods and data collection techniques, justification of choices and limitations and potential biases.

Regarding the research design, this study was carefully selected based on its appropriateness for addressing the research objectives. The chosen design was a theoretical and qualitative research, which allowed for an in-depth exploration, description and analysis of the EU's actions to enhance third countries' climate action. It provided a rich understanding of the complexities and nuances surrounding this topic, including the dynamics between the EU and third countries, policy frameworks and implementation processes.

Various data sources were used to gather comprehensive and diverse information for the analysis. These included:

- EU documentation: Official EU documents, reports, publications and Council Conclusions related to climate action, climate diplomacy and international political and financial cooperation instruments were consulted. These sources provided insights into the EU's political initiatives, coordination strategies, and funding mechanisms for supporting third countries' climate action.
- Primary sources: primary sources such as the co-chairs' summaries of the Ministerial on Climate Action meetings, press releases from EU Commissioners, Presidents or Executive Vice-Presidents, official statements and speeches... provided a direct information on specific agreements, commitments and perspectives of the EU's support initiatives and projects directed to third countries.
- Secondary sources: Reports and publications from reputable think tanks, non-governmental organisations and UN bodies were examined. These sources offered independent analyses, assessments and evaluations of the EU's actions and roles in supporting third countries' climate actions, providing valuable perspectives and insights.

In addition to the previously mentioned data sources, this research also incorporated the analysis of Twitter official posts and newspaper articles to gain deeper insights

into the visions and aspirations of third countries and the European Union. These sources provided real-time and public perspectives, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between the EU and third countries.

Additionally, several data collection methods were employed, including:

- Literature Review: A comprehensive literature review was conducted in the previous chapter to identify the relevant theoretical frameworks, definitions and prior research related to the EU's role in enhancing climate change actions, especially within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. As earlier mentioned, the Literature Review served as a foundation for the present paper and guided the research process.
- Document Analysis: The data sources previously presented were critically analysed to extract relevant information, identify key factors and gain insights into the EU's approaches, policies and initiatives.
- Content Analysis: the collected data also underwent through content analysis to identify patterns, recurring actions and key findings.

Overall, the research design, methods and data collection techniques used in the present paper were aligned with the research objectives of examining the three examples of EU's external action that served to later analyse the Union's role in supporting and governing international climate action. By drawing on relevant theoretical perspectives, such as the leadership role of the European Union, the paper contributes to the development of the theoretical knowledge in the field. As well, by incorporating diverse sources into the qualitative research, a comprehensive and multi-dimensional analysis was conducted, providing insights into the different approaches of the EU towards climate action.

Ultimately, it is important to acknowledge the potential limitations and biases in the methodology employed. Social media platforms, press releases, think tanks opinions and news articles can be influenced by various factors, including the biases of the authors or the platforms themselves. Furthermore, the availability and accessibility of data, especially primary sources were limited, potentially influencing the comprehensiveness of the analysis. These limitations were addressed by employing a critical approach and considering multiple viewpoints in the interpretation of the findings.

V. THREE ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF EU'S ACTIONS

This chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the EU's role in supporting climate action globally, spanning from the adoption of the Paris Agreement to the present. Considering the previous literature review, the aim is to bridge the gap of research on the specific ways in which the EU contributes to advancing climate actions in partner nations under the Paris Agreement.

Through a comprehensive examination, this chapter will provide valuable insights into the EU's engagement, in order to inform policy recommendation and contribute to further enhancing international collaboration towards achieving global climate goals.

Specifically, it will focus on the analysis of three specific actions led by the EU:

- 1- The Ministerial on Climate Action (MoCA);
- 2- The Just Energy Transition Partnerships with Indonesia, Vietnam and South Africa; and
- 3- The EU's cooperation and financial aid.

These examples offer insights into the diverse approaches taken by the EU, highlighting distinct facets of EU action: The MoCA represents the political engagement instruments that the European Union uses to achieve further climate action and facilitate the implementation of the Paris Agreement at the highest political level. The Just Energy Transition Partnerships are an example of plurilateral attempts of the Union at helping the fast growing and emitting countries to take the turn. And ultimately, cooperation and financial aid consist of the proper traditional instrument of the European Union, together with the EU Member States to a point, that offer an overall approach to climate action.

The EU combines political engagement and global partnerships, targeted collaborations with specific countries, and financial aid and cooperation to foster progress in addressing climate change and promoting sustainable development. Each action complements the others, contributing to the EU's overall efforts to tackle the global challenge.

5.1 MoCA: the platform to engage politically with other parties

This section delves into the analysis of the EU's participation in the MoCA as a foreign policy instrument to support climate action in third countries. By exploring the context within this initiative arose, analysing the EU's reasons to co-convene its sessions and examining such meetings chronologically, the section sheds light on how the EU strategically employs MoCA to advance its foreign policy goals and foster climate action on a global scale.

5.1.1 The emergence of the Ministerial on Climate Action

The Ministerial on Climate Action (MoCA) consists of annual meetings among ministers and high-level representatives from over 30 countries, including some G20 countries and chairs of key party groupings in the UN climate negotiations. The primary purpose of the MoCA is to facilitate the engagement in substantive discussions and coordination efforts pertaining to global climate action.

Those sessions originated as a response of the decision by the United States to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, which prompted the European Union, China and Canada to establish this format as a means to reinforce global climate efforts. It is worth mentioning that the MoCA, to some extent, represents a significant transition from the previously established Major Economies Forum (MEF), a platform spearheaded by the United States in the pre-Trump era. The MEF played a pivotal role in facilitating dialogues on climate change among the world's foremost economic powers. However, with the subsequent change in the US leadership and the resulting shift in global dynamics, the MoCA has surfaced as a novel forum dedicated to promoting comprehensive discussions on climate action.

Nevertheless, the Ministerial on Climate Action represents a distinct departure from its predecessor, reflecting an evolving commitment to advancing climate-related conversations and including developing countries as well. Due to the inclusive nature of the Paris Agreement, counting on everyone in these sessions is crucial, as Paris marked the first universal agreement in terms of action on climate change.

This collaborative approach highlights the shared responsibility of these influential actors in fostering comprehensive discussions on climate action. Through their joint efforts, the MoCA seeks to enhance international cooperation, foster political engagement, and drive progress in implementing the goals and commitments of the Paris Agreement.

5.1.2 The European Union co-convening MoCA

The European Union, in collaboration with China and Canada, co-convenes the Ministerial on Climate Change since 2017 for the following reasons:

Firstly, the active involvement of China, the EU and Canada as co-conveners reflects their commitment and prioritisation of climate action at the political level. Their presence amplifies the credibility and impact of the discussions and reinforces the gravity and urgency of addressing climate change.

Secondly, MoCA serves as a platform for global coordination, where ministers and other high-level representatives can easily exchange information, share best practices and coordinate global initiatives among the participating countries.

Thirdly, the Ministerial plays a vital role in policy formulation and implementation. The European Union makes use of it to reaffirm its position to advancing climate goals beyond its borders, align with third countries and set common goals within the Paris Agreement to increase climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Lastly, as a prominent regional bloc that possesses significant political and economic weight, the EU can leverage its diplomatic and negotiation skills to advocate for ambitious climate policies within the MoCA, while strengthening its position as a leader in global climate governance.

The Ministerial on Climate Action, apart from its content, serves to keep global momentum and incentivise other countries' participation in the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

5.1.3 Timeline & Analysis

As stated in the first meeting summary, on September 17 of 2017, “Canada, China and the European Union convened the Ministerial Meeting on Climate Action to advance discussions on the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and to demonstrate continued political commitment to global action”¹⁰. This initial gathering set the tone for subsequent meetings of the MoCA, with two of them being conducted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The following table (Table 1) gathers the essential information of every reunion:

Meeting Date	Location	Host
September 15-16, 2017	Montréal, Canada	Canada
June 20-21, 2018	Brussels, Belgium	European Union
June 28, 2019	Brussels, Belgium	China
July 7, 2020	Virtual Meeting	European Union
March 23, 2021	Virtual Meeting	China
May 30-31, 2022	Stockholm, Sweden	Canada

Table 1: The 6 MoCA meetings: date, location and hosts
(Own creation)

September 15-16, 2017 (First MoCA)

The first MoCA meeting took place in Montréal, Canada, signalling the political commitment of Canada, China and the European Union. Representatives from 34 governments, namely Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Morocco, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States attended the meeting (Co-chairs summary, 2017).

Although the US reiterated its intention to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, the other participants stated that the agreement was not to be renegotiated and acknowledged the importance of pre-2020 action and financial, technology and capacity-building support (IISD, 2017). As well, with an emphasis on global efforts being “at a critical juncture”

¹⁰ Ministerial meeting on climate action co-chairs summary *op. cit.*

(Co-chairs summary, 2017), the representatives recognised the role of ambitious climate action in protecting the environment, spurring clean growth and sustainable development, creating jobs and improving human health (IISD, 2017).

According to a representative from the European Commission, “This first gathering of its kind aims to further galvanise global momentum for the implementation of the Paris Agreement”¹¹. Moreover, Catherine McKenna, Canada’s Minister of Environment said in a statement: “This meeting brings together major economies and key climate actors to advance the implementation of the Paris Agreement and demonstrate continued commitment to global action on climate change”¹².

In order to exchange knowledge and showcase successful approaches, numerous participants emphasized their respective countries' strategies and first-hand experiences in reducing emissions and adapting to climate change. They expressed unwavering commitment to implementing these initiatives and fulfilling their Nationally Determined Contributions, highlighting the importance of collective efforts in addressing climate challenges (Co-chairs summary, 2017). As well, in the summary states that “a number of participants [...] underscored the importance of carbon pricing”, which makes the author understand that the European Union played a crucial role in this discussion as a supporter of this idea, taking into account its 2005 Emissions Trading System (ETS) and its new Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

By co-convening the meeting alongside Canada and China, the EU showcased its leadership and determination to tackle climate change on a global scale and the implementation of the Paris Agreement. It was underscored that taking action was critical at that moment in order to accelerate the global transition to a low-carbon and resilient economy (Co-chairs summary, 2017). Hence, the EU’s involvement in the first MoCA laid a strong foundation for continued collaboration and demonstrating progress towards a sustainable development.

¹¹ Climate Action (2017). Canada, China and the EU co-host meeting to talk the post-US withdrawal Paris Agreement. Available at: <<https://www.climateaction.org/news/canada-china-and-the-eu-co-host-meeting-to-talk-the-post-us-withdrawal-pari>>

¹² *Ibidem*.

June 20-21, 2018 (Second MoCA)

The second Ministerial on Climate Action meeting took place in Brussels between the 20th and 21st of June of 2018. The meeting focused generally on obtaining ministerial input and steering the processes and outcomes of COP24 with a stronger focus on the Paris Agreement Work Programme (PAWP), according to Council report n° 9944/18 of 11th June 2018¹³. As well, the second MoCA served as an opportunity to reflect on different government's expectations and preparation for the participation in processes such as the Talanoa, the High Level dialogue on Climate Finance and the pre-2020 Stocktake (Report n° 9944/18).

Following the opening remarks by the Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete, the second MoCA was “an opportunity for deeper and more detailed peer-to-peer conversations on the political differences” that they had to resolve for a successful conclusion to COP24¹⁴. According to a Fiji's newspaper, the second MoCA started with “big divides between the EU and China over aspects of the Paris rulebook”, so it was expected that the aim of this meeting was to find a global consensus¹⁵. Moreover, the Commissioner's speech underscored the EU's commitment to multilateralism and the function of the MoCA as a platform for ministerial guidance, enabling a successful implementation of the Paris agreement, with an update of climate policies and an increase of renewable energy and energy efficiency targets. During the MoCA, the EU stressed the importance of robust guidance that imparts confidence, flexibility to accommodate differences in capacities, and dynamism to ensure performance improvement over time.

As well, Arias Cañete disclosed that the EU is posed to elevate its commitment under the Paris Agreement to reducing emissions and instead of the previously established target of 40% emissions reductions by 2030, the EU negotiators had recently reached agreements on three clean energy laws, leading to an upward adjustment of the target to 45%

¹³ Report (EU) n° 9944/18 of the Council of the European Union, 11th June 2018, on main recent international meetings: 1) EU for Talanoa, ii) Ministerial on Climate Action, iii) Ninth Petersberg Climate Dialogue.

¹⁴ Arias Cañete, M. (2018) Opening remarks by Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete at the Second Ministerial on Climate Action (MoCA) by the EU, China and Canada. [SPEECH/18/4236] Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_18_4236>

¹⁵ Bolatiki, M. (2018). Primer Minister Voreqe Bainimarama Heads to Germany, Brussels Meetings. *FijiSun Newspaper*. Article available at: <<https://fijisun.com.fj/2018/06/18/prime-minister-voreqe-bainimarama-heads-to-germany-brussels-meetings/>>

(Euractiv, 2018). The Spanish minister pointed out that the adoption of those newly agreed targets would effectively enable the EU to elevate its level of ambition in its nationally determined contributions (NDC) (Euractiv, 2018). However, it is worth highlighting that the Commissioner also acknowledged that EU's efforts, while significant, account for less than 10% of global emissions. Therefore, he emphasized the need for collective action, involving all countries, regions and actors worldwide (Arias Cañete, 2018).

In line with the Commissioner's comments, MEPs "called on the EEAS and national capitals to ensure that any cooperation with third-party countries is fully consistent with the Paris obligations" (Euractiv, 2018). "By reaching out to specific countries, topics like the development of carbon markets or sustainable investments can be accelerated in particular," co-rapporteur Jo Leinen (S&D group) said in a statement (Euractiv, 2018).

In conclusion, the second Ministerial on Climate Action served as a platform for the EU to solidify its commitment to climate leadership in the face of the United States' decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. The EU had the opportunity to fill the void created by the US withdrawal and sought to enhance its role as a global leader in addressing climate change. By actively engaging in discussions and negotiations at the MoCA, the EU aimed to strengthen its position as a key player in the global climate arena and inspire other nations to intensify their climate efforts.

June 28, 2019 (Third MoCA)

Ministers and the high-level representatives from over 30 countries convened for the third Ministerial on Climate Action again at the European Union's headquarters on 28th June of 2019. This meeting came at a critical juncture, as the focus in the climate arena shifted from the negotiations under the UNFCCC to the implementation and ambitious actions needed for the transition to low-carbon and climate-resilient economies (DG Clima, 2019). Departing from its previous format that primarily involved discussions among ministers, this edition fostered open and honest dialogue between politicians and practitioners, who were informed by the perspective of industry, the financial sector, investors, insurers, civil society, expert organisations and citizens (DG Clima, 2019). Its agenda was structured in UNFCCC negotiations challenges and process, implementation, and ambition respectively (DG Clima, 2019).

Finance, capacity building, and technology support for developing countries were recognized as crucial during the MoCA, with an understanding that private sector investment would be essential for accelerating innovation and deploying new technologies. Overall, the meeting underscored the need to answer the calls from youth, citizens, and communities worldwide. Furthermore, ministers and other participants welcomed the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit as an opportunity to showcase actions and initiatives and as a pivotal moment for maintaining the political momentum towards ambition. At the end, all convening ministers agreed on to continue to engage in this setting in the future.

To conclude, as Commissioner Arias Cañete stated in his tweet on 28th June of 2019, the third Ministerial on Climate Action was considered to turn the Paris Agreement into real action. Quoting President Juncker at the G20 meeting in Osaka, he reaffirmed that “Europe will continue to lead the way, as we did in Paris”.

July 7, 2020 (Fourth MoCA)

On July 7th of 2020, the fourth MoCA took place virtually for the first time in history, with the EU as the host. The decision to hold virtual meetings was a COVID-19 response to ensure the continuity of climate action discussions and collaboration among participating countries. While face-to-face interactions offer valuable opportunities for personal connections and deeper engagement, the virtual format allowed for ongoing dialogue and progress despite the constraints imposed by the pandemic.

The main topic of the fourth meeting was the recovery of economies after the sanitary crisis in accordance with the provisions of the Paris Agreement and improving resilience against future crises (DG Clima, 2020). As vice-President Frans Timmermans stated, “The planet cannot wait for us to take action on climate change. We have been forced by COVID19 to postpone COP26, but we are working with all of our international partners to share ideas and experience on restructuring and cleaning up our economies. The €750 billion Recovery Package proposed by the European Commission has the green transition at its heart, including in our support for recovery in partner countries, and I was pleased to present this to my colleagues from around the world today. Without a green recovery we would come out of the COVID crisis only to find out we’ve sleepwalked into a climate crisis.” Timmermans acknowledged the urgency of the climate crisis and underlined the

EU's commitment to delivering green and sustainable recovery. According to the previous quote, the European Union recognises the need for determination and a long-term vision that takes into account the urgency stressed by scientific evidence. This reflects the EU's understanding that climate action is not just about environmental concerns but also about addressing the challenges of economic growth and social development in a holistic and mutually supportive manner.

Furthermore, with an understanding that the “developing countries and, in particular, the poorest and most vulnerable are facing some of the harshest impacts of climate change [...] combined with public health and [the] economic crisis triggered by the pandemic, [...] ministers called for global solidarity and highlighted the importance of finance, technology transfer and capacity building to ensure that the recovery agenda allows for a just transition towards low-carbon and climate resilient societies [...]” (Chairs’ Summary 2020).

In conclusion, the EU's positive impact on third countries during the fourth MoCA can be seen through the ministers' commitment to global solidarity and long-term green transition solutions. It is sure that a comprehensive and inclusive approach to climate action was actively promoted and, by advocating for these measures, the EU contributes to strengthening diplomatic cooperation and increasing just and equal climate action ambitions. In fact, according to Dr. Christian Burgsmüller, European Union *Chargé d'affaires* in Canada, “Canada and the EU are spearheading Paris implementation efforts through the Ministerial on Climate Action and through G7 and G20 initiatives” (2020).

March 23, 2021 (Fifth MoCA)

The fifth Ministerial on Climate Action was celebrated for the second time virtually on the 23rd of March of 2021 with China as the host. The meeting served as the inaugural ministerial gathering of the year on international climate action, paving the way for the next COP26 in November of that year (DG Clima, 2021). The deliberations focused in elevating worldwide ambition and fostering climate collaboration and solidarity (DG Clima, 2021). Additionally, the participants, including Ministers from G20 countries and other key parties in the UN negotiations, were provided the space to address country-specific obstacles and prospects related to the implementation of low-carbon, resilient and sustainable recoveries after the COVID-19 crisis (DG Clima, 2021).

During the meeting, the preparation of national climate policies for the implementation of the Paris Agreement was still the main goal of the ministerial gathering, according to posts of MoCA participants¹⁶. As the EU aimed to implement its ambitious European Green Deal, certain political considerations and strategic actions had to be taken into account (Bruegel, 2021). For instance, a greener Europe required an increased import of clean-energy products and inputs. Notably, China, as the dominant player in the market for rare earth materials, which are vital components for renewable technologies such as wind turbines and electric vehicles, stood to benefit from Europe's green transition (Bruegel, 2021).

The role of the European Union in the fifth MoCA played a crucial political role in leading the fight against climate change. It was important to coordinate climate ambitions and actions towards a successful COP26 and sending a “clear political signal” of firm commitment to advance global climate governance while accelerating the green recovery in the post-pandemic context (DG Clima, 2021).

May 30-31, 2022 (Sixth MoCA)

In May 2022, Canada hosted the sixth meeting on the Ministerial on Climate Action, that took place again in presential form in Stockholm, Sweden after two years of virtual MoCA sessions due to COVID-19. The last MoCA meeting presented a valuable occasion for participants to engage in discussions regarding the lessons learned from the last three decades since the adoption of the UNFCCC, which coincided with its 30th anniversary that year (DG Clima, 2022). The session enabled deliberations on advancing the transition to sustainable and resilient economies with net-zero emissions (DG Clima, 2022).

During EVP Timmermans' speech, he recalled the importance of maintaining focus on the efforts and achievements made over the last 30 years in the realm of climate action in Paris, Katowice or Glasgow “even if there are other, sometimes even more compelling, more urgent matters we need to address”, referring to the recent war in Ukraine (Timmermans, 2022). Furthermore, Timmermans emphasised the critical need to translate climate commitments into tangible actions, mentioning that, without urgent

¹⁶ See the press release of the Polish government here: <<https://www.gov.pl/web/klimat/minister-klimatu-i-srodowiska-podczas-ministerial-on-climate-action>> (23.03.2021).

action, the agreements made in Glasgow would remain mere words on paper and fail to bring about the necessary changes in societies worldwide (Timmermans, 2022). The speaker also described the Ministerial on Climate Action (MoCA) as a platform where the focus shifts from discussing "what" needs to be done to addressing the crucial question of "how" to achieve those goals (Timmermans, 2022). The Ministerial gave the participants a “sense of urgency” and also “expressed clear solidarity”, but he stresses the need to “look into that more concretely” (Timmermans, 2022).

In other words, the European Union advocated for all work programmes from COP26 not to be talk shop but to result in concrete outcomes and milestones at COP27, where countries translate their collective commitment into concrete climate action on the ground (Climate Action Network Europe, 2022). Given the enhanced scientific knowledge about climate change, the panellists noted as well the pressing need for greater ambition in all aspects of climate action (Chairs’ Summary, 2022). They also acknowledged the growing significance of national-level action in effectively achieving the national targets set within the framework of the UNFCCC, and they recognised the importance of promoting implementation and transparency on action and support (Chairs’ Summary 2022).

In conclusion, MoCA was the first major ministerial meeting on international climate action of the year that set the political direction for subsequent technical negotiations. It played a crucial role as a steppingstone towards the following COP27 conference later in November and shaped the discussions and the decisions that will determine global climate policies and actions in the near future (European Commission - Daily News, 2022).

By participating in a platform for high-level engagement and collaboration, the EU leaders a meaningful progress in addressing the climate crisis at both national and international levels.

5.2 Just Energy Transition Partnerships: the plurilateral attempt

The European Union's plurilateral efforts to assist fast-growing and high-emitting countries in transition towards a more sustainable and low-carbon energy systems can be exemplified by the Just Energy Partnerships with South Africa, Indonesia and Vietnam. The Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETP) were first announced at the COP26 in Glasgow with the aim to address the unique challenges faced by each country and support them in achieving their climate and energy goals while promoting social and economic development. The intention behind of this model was to provide a framework for cooperation between countries in the Global North and the Global South, and to facilitate the transition to clean energy for more developing nations.

This section will showcase how these bilateral partnerships promote collaboration, knowledge exchange and capacity building between the EU and its partner countries to contribute to global efforts to combat climate change under the Paris Agreement.

5.2.1 Just Energy Transition Partnership with South Africa

Due to its substantial coal resources, South Africa emerged as the 13th largest emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs) worldwide in 2020. The country's total emissions amounted to approximately 435 million tCO₂-eq, positioning South Africa as the leading emitter within the African continent (Tyler & Mgoduso, 2022).

In November 2021, the EU announced the establishment of the first Just Energy Transition Partnership with South Africa. This partnership received significant funding, with five of the current International Public Group (IPG) members - France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States - pledging a total of \$8.5 billion in the first financing round (Green Network, 2023).

The primary objective of the JEPT is to expedite the decarbonization process within South Africa's economy, with a particular emphasis on the electricity sector (European Commission, 2021). By doing so, the partnership aims to assist South Africa in achieving its ambitious targets as outlined in its updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) emissions goals (European Commission, 2021). European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen noted: "This partnership is a global first and could become a

template on how to support just transition around the world. By joining forces, we can speed up the phasing out of coal in partner countries, while supporting vulnerable communities that depend on it. Ensuring a just transition is a priority for the EU, both at home and abroad.” (European Commission, 2021).

The press release issued at the time of the JETP announcement expressed the significance of the partnership as a “powerful example of action through a global collaboration between an emerging economy and international partners to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees” (European Commission, 2021). In that sense, the JETP was very needed for cooperation and joint action in the field of climate and energy between Europe and Africa because, according to a research paper of the European Think Tanks Group (ETTG) (2022), the Union was looking to diversify its energy imports due to the Russian invasion to Ukraine, while Africa represented a region with untapped potential and significant investment opportunities. The ET TG concludes that strengthening cooperation between the two continents seems logical in this context but, to move forward, it states that “the EU should build a strong Africa diplomacy based on partnership, and it should structure discussions with African countries not just around the EU’s need for imports but also Africa’s industrialisation and development needs” (ET TG, 2022).

Nonetheless, the JETP with South Africa has a strong foundation on just transition that takes into account the country’s situation and needs with more than ten years of acknowledgment and research (UNOPS & ETP, 2023a). As stated by the Presidential Climate Commission (2022), “The framework stands on the shoulders of years of research in South Africa on the just transition, done by government, business, civil society, academia, and labour unions”. In that regard, the European Union plays a role in leading a just transition with job creation and rapid and inclusive economic growth within South Africa. At the end, the partnership is about transforming pledges into tangible actions, foster more robust and extensive cooperation and confront the most pressing challenge of our era, climate change.

5.2.2 Just Energy Transition Partnership with Indonesia

Indonesia ranks among the leading contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions originating from the land sector, primarily attributed to agricultural activities, particularly the conversion of land for lucrative palm oil production, as well as peat and forest fires (Climate Transparency, 2022). In order to adhere to the ambitious target of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°, Indonesia must take significant steps to transform its land use and forestry sector into a net absorber of emissions (Climate Transparency, 2022).

During the G20 leaders' summit held in Bali, an important development took place as Indonesia's Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) was announced boasting an even larger consortium of IPG donors, now including Japan, the US, Canada, Denmark, Germany, France, Norway, Italy the UL and the EU. The JETP set forth a clear emissions trajectory for Indonesia and outlined strategies to achieve it, with a budget of \$20 billion over a period of 3 to 5 years (IISD, 2022).

The primary aim is to phase out the use of coal as an energy source and facilitate the expansion of renewable energy infrastructure, in order to cover 34% of Indonesia's power generation by 2030 and reach net zero emissions in the power sector by 2050 (Chipman Koty, 2023). By peaking power sector emissions by 2030 (earlier than the previously set target of 2037) and implementing measure to cap carbon dioxide emissions at a level approximately 25% lower than previous projections by the same time, the establishment of Indonesia's JETP is a significant advancement in the pursuit of the countries objectives (IISD, 2022).

Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission's President, stated in the press release that "The Just Energy Transition Partnership for Indonesia will chart a roadmap to a greener, cleaner future in the country – and a future full of opportunities for the Indonesian people. They will be the ones reaping the benefits of the transformation of their economy, as Indonesia becomes a renewables hub." (European Commission, 2022). Along those lines, the EU's support was emphasized in achieving significant new climate targets and policies to reduce GHGs while supporting those impacted communities along the process.

As such, Indonesia's embrace of climate action is expected to have a significant impact on the development of its emerging green economy. With the implementation of the JETP, the Indonesian government is incentivised to initiate reforms that promote the use of renewable energy sources. This commitment to clean energy is likely to create a conducive environment for additional reforms focused on the green economy in the coming year, specifically in 2023 (World Bank, 2023). As a result, Indonesia's efforts to address climate change and transition to a sustainable energy sector are poised to drive further advancements and opportunities in its green economy.

5.2.3 Just Energy Transition Partnership with Vietnam

Vietnam has undergone a remarkable transformation from one of the world's poorest nations to a developing middle-income country (EIAS, 2023). However, this transformation has been fuelled primarily by abundant coal reserves and the establishment of power plants within the country (EIAS, 2023).

In December 2022, Vietnam officially joined the JETP, marking a significant step in its efforts to address climate change and promote sustainable development. The partnership was the result of extensive negotiations and demonstrated IPG countries' commitment to accelerating Vietnam's energy transition (Green Network, 2023). Vietnam's JETP aims to provide comprehensive support to Vietnam in various areas crucial for sustainable development, such as financial assistance, technological advancements, and capacity building initiatives (Green Network, 2023). This partnership entails an initial funding of \$15.5 billion for the upcoming three to five years and it is anticipated that Vietnam will release its JETP Resource Mobilization Plan (JETP-RMP) by November 2023.

The EU and Vietnam already concluded a Free Trade Agreement in August 2020, which, according to the EIAS (2023), "strengthened their partnership and demonstrated their advanced level of cooperation and dialogue". After the JETP was sealed in 2022 during the EU-ASEAN meetings, President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, stated that the EU would "help Viet Nam to start reducing its greenhouse gas emissions five years earlier than planned, and dramatically reduce its coal power use.¹⁷" In diplomatic

¹⁷ See the press release on 14th December 2022 here: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_7671

terms, this is a demonstration of the EU's willingness to collaborate closely with the country in addressing climate change and transitioning to cleaner energy sources by offering assistance and showing dedication to support Vietnam's sustainable development. As well, this statement also signalled a strong diplomatic relationship between the two, characterised by mutual trust and a shared vision for a greener future.

Moreover, a report by the United Nations office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the Energy Transition Partnership (ETP) (2023a) highlights that the JETP in Vietnam is structured as a "high-level political commitment". As a result, direct negotiations between the Vietnamese government and the IPG played a crucial role in ensuring the level of ambition required to meet the objectives of both parties (UNOPS & ETP, 2023a). According to the authors, the closed and confidential nature of discussions and negotiations has also been important in forging a strong and collaborative partnership between Vietnam and the IPG.

South Africa and Indonesia have already embarked on significant actions to implement their respective JETPs, offering valuable experiences and lessons that are applicable and relevant to Vietnam's context (UNOPS & ETP, 2023b). Nonetheless, in Vietnam's situation, it is crucial to recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach based on the energy roadmaps of developed nations may not guarantee success (EIAS, 2023). Instead, the country can ensure that its green transition remains on track and conducive to long-term success by making strategic decisions and avoiding excessive debt (EIAS, 2023).

This approach recognizes the importance of collective action in achieving an effective and sustainable transition to a low-carbon future. The just transition framework goes beyond addressing environmental concerns and takes into account the social and economic dimensions of the transition. Through the Vietnam JETP, the EU aims to provide not only financial and technological support but also policy and regulatory assistance to encourage private investment in renewable energy. By facilitating a smoother and more effective transition, the just transition approach can help Vietnam overcome challenges and accelerate its progress towards a sustainable and green economy.

In conclusion, Vietnam's JETP represents a significant milestone in the EU's efforts to support and enhance climate action in non-EU countries. By emphasizing the principles of a just transition, the EU aims to not only prioritize fairness and societal well-being but also foster a collaborative approach between developed and developing countries.

After South Africa, Indonesia, and Vietnam, India emerges as the next potential candidate for a JETP, with its forthcoming G20 presidency providing an opportunity to establish a transformative deal that aligns with the country's regional energy transition objectives (EIAS, 2023). However, the path to a successful energy transition in India is not without challenges, particularly concerning the potential impact on jobs reliant on fossil fuels in the near term (EIAS, 2023). The EU can address these challenges by taking proactive measures and offering support to India in its energy transition journey.

5.3 EU cooperation & financial aid: the overall approach

In its overarching approach to support climate action in third countries, the European Union recognises the crucial role of funding in achieving global climate objectives. Cooperation and financial aid constitute the core instruments employed by the EU, alongside the contribution of EU Member States, to provide a comprehensive framework for addressing climate change. By combining international cooperation and financial assistance, the EU aims to foster collaborative solutions and advance global climate objectives effectively.

This section examines the importance of funding for climate action, the EU's efforts in international cooperation to finance climate action, the impact of EU's funding on developing countries and the effectiveness of its financial support in advancing climate action.

5.3.1 The importance of funding for climate action

In light with the information provided by the United Nations, the importance of funding for climate action cannot be overstated, as it plays a crucial role in achieving global climate goals and averting catastrophic consequences. Without adequate investment in the right areas, the world risks surpassing the critical threshold of a 1.5 degree Celsius temperature rise, leading to intensified climate impacts that would jeopardize the health, livelihoods, and well-being of people worldwide (UN, 2023).

Addressing climate change needs substantial financial resources, particularly for investments in new energy systems and climate-resilient infrastructure (UN, 2023). Failing to take action against climate change, on the other hand, would be far costlier in the long run. All countries must contribute to emission reduction and adaptation efforts, but many developing nations lack the necessary resources and technology to do so effectively (UN, 2023). Recognizing this disparity, countries collectively agreed that industrialized nations, equipped with financial means and technological expertise, must step up and increase their support for climate action in developing countries, particularly those that are most impoverished and vulnerable. International cooperation is essential in tackling the global challenge of climate change.

As a matter of fact, Climate finance plays a crucial role within the framework of the 2015 Paris Agreement, which established a significant objective of \$100 billion per year as the contribution from developed countries towards international climate finance until 2025 (European Council, 2023).

5.3.2 EU's international cooperation in funding for climate action

The Union is highly committed to promoting and facilitating a shift towards an economy that is low in carbon emissions, more efficient in resource utilization and sustainable in the long term in line with the Paris Agreement and the 2030 UN Sustainable Goals (European Council, 2023). Particularly, the European Union collectively offers climate finance through bilateral and multilateral contributions, including the EU budget, the public budgets of its Member States, as well as through other development finance institutions (Climate Action Network Europe, 2021).

In fact, the EU together with its Member States and the European Investment Bank hold the position of being the world's foremost contributors of public climate finance. For instance, in 2021, they provided a substantial amount of climate finance, totalling €23.04 billion to developing economies (European Council, 2023). Over half of the funding, accounting more than 54%, was specifically allocated towards climate adaptation efforts or initiatives that encompass both climate change mitigation and adaptation in developing countries.

The range of financial tools that the European Union deploys to support third countries' climate actions encompass various approaches tailored to specific needs and sectors. One key instrument is grants, which provide direct funding to support climate initiatives in partner countries. Grants can be utilized for capacity building, technical assistance, and project implementation, enabling recipient countries to enhance their climate resilience and pursue sustainable development pathways. In addition to grants, the EU employs blending mechanisms to combine grants with other financing sources, such as loans or equity investments. This blending approach helps leverage additional financial resources and attract private sector participation in climate projects. By blending different types of funding, the EU maximizes the impact of its financial support and facilitates the implementation of large-scale climate initiatives.

The EU also collaborates with European Union Member States (EUMS) through Team Europe initiatives, leveraging their financial contributions and expertise to enhance climate action in third countries. Through coordinated efforts, the EU and EUMS pool their resources and align their strategies to provide comprehensive support for climate-related projects, fostering synergies and ensuring efficient use of available funds.

Furthermore, the EU engages in multilateral channels to channel financial support for third countries' climate actions. It collaborates with international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and regional development banks, to mobilize resources and facilitate access to climate finance. By leveraging these multilateral partnerships, the EU expands the reach of its financial support and promotes global collaboration in addressing climate challenges.

It is important to recall the need to address climate change through a sector-specific approach that takes into account the unique challenges and priorities of partner countries. When it comes to climate adaptation, for instance, funds may be used to implement coastal protection measures, such as constructing sea walls or restoring mangrove forests. In the case of emerging economies, such as rapidly developing countries with significant economic growth potential, the EU may focus on fostering green economic growth, supporting clean technology transfer, and encouraging sustainable development pathways. These forms of assistance provide direct financial support without imposing heavy repayment burdens in order to enable these countries to implement climate mitigation and adaptation measures and strengthen their resilience to climate change impacts.

In summary, while the overarching goals of the EU's financial tools remains the same across different partner countries, the specific instruments and approaches used can be tailored to the unique circumstances and needs of each economy. In the next table (Table 2), there are some of the initiatives and instruments that played a significant role in channelling climate finance from the EU to non-EU countries, supporting their efforts to address climate change, promote sustainable development and build climate resilience.

Initiative	Description
<p>Global Europe: Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)</p>	<p>It is a financial instrument of the EU that supports the EU’s external cooperation and development objectives. It includes provisions for climate finance and sustainable development initiatives in non-EU countries. The NDICI aims to address climate change challenges, promote green and inclusive growth, and support the transition to a low-carbon economy in partner countries.</p>
<p>Green Climate Fund (GCF)</p>	<p>It is a global fund established by the UNFCCC to support climate action in developing countries and serves the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. It provides financial resources to support projects and programs that contribute to low-emission and climate-resilient development. The GCF receives contributions from various countries, including the EU, to expand collective human action to respond to climate change.</p>
<p>Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (GCCA+)</p>	<p>It is an EU initiative that provides financial and technical assistance to developing countries to help them integrate climate change into their development policies and strategies. The GCCA works through the European Commission’s established channels for political dialogue and cooperation at national and international level. In 2015, it became a new phase by the flagship initiative GGCA+, a new strategic orientation towards supporting the 2015 Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It focuses on adaptation and mitigation measures, capacity building, and knowledge sharing.</p>

Initiative	Description
European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+)	It is a financial instrument of the EU, included in the Global Europe – NDICI, that aims to mobilise public and private investments for sustainable development projects in partner countries, including climate-related initiatives. It provides grants, guarantees and concessional loans to support climate mitigation, adaptation and sustainable development efforts in non-EU countries.
Leveraging climate-friendly investments	The EU emphasises the importance of leveraging climate-friendly investments by combining grants, loans and equities from public and private sources. This approach aims to attract additional financial resources and engage the private sector in financing climate-related projects. By leveraging investments, the EU enhances the scale and impact of climate finance efforts, promoting sustainable development and low-carbon transitions.

*Table 2: The climate financing from the EU: initiatives and their description
(Own creation)*

Please note that this ordering is based on the approximate establishment dates and does not reflect any specific ranking or priority.

According to an analysis of the Climate Action Network Europe (CANE) of 2021, almost half of the EU’s funding for developing countries was allocated to climate adaptation or cross-cutting action that addresses both mitigation and adaptation. However, CANE concluded that there was a lack of clarity regarding the specific distribution between the two categories and the proportions within the cross-cutting action. Indeed, at the beginning of 2021, the UN Secretary-General called on parties to achieve a balanced approach between mitigation and adaptation finance due to the significant gap in funding for global adaptation efforts (CANE, 2021).

Nonetheless, the EU and its Member States actively engaged in reporting their climate finance efforts to both the UNFCCC and the OECD. Each European Member State makes their own commitments for climate finance and, thus, the modalities and the approach differed from country to country (Dejgaard & Appelt, 2018). The Union, however, has been diligent in compiling detailed information on its climate finance activities through its Biennial Reports submitted to the UNFCCC since 2011. (Dejgaard & Appelt, 2018). These reports provide a comprehensive overview of the EU's financial support for climate-related initiatives, including both mitigation and adaptation efforts.

5.3.3 *Impact of the EU's funding for climate action on developing countries*

The analysis of the impact of EU's initiatives on third countries and, particularly on developing countries, is of crucial importance in understanding the effectiveness and outcomes of these financial activities globally. The EU is recognized as a global leader in climate action, both in terms of policy development and financial commitment. Understanding the EU's impact on developing countries helps assess its *leader* role and provides valuable lessons about its successes and challenges faced by this concrete action, aimed to engage other countries' into taking climate action.

According to a report¹⁸ made by the European Court of Auditors (ECA), the Global Climate Change Alliance Plus initiative worth €729 million and implemented by the European Commission lacked tangible evidence of its effectiveness in enhancing countries' resilience to climate change. As well, auditors discovered that the initiative failed to prioritise the most vulnerable regions, allocated excessive resources to “capacity building” activities rather than concrete adaptation projects, and suffered from inadequate promotion and insufficient contributions from other donors. “Overall, we found that the initiative did not demonstrate its impact on countries' resilience to climate change”, stated the report on Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA).

Moreover, the European Commission did not meet its own target of allocating 20% of the EU budget for the period 2014-2020 to climate action, following another ECA report¹⁹.

¹⁸ European Court of Auditors (2023) The Global Climate Change Alliance+ Achievements fell short of ambitions. Available at: <<https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eca/special-reports/climate-change-04-2023/en/>>

¹⁹ ECA (2022) Climate spending in the 2014-2020 budget not as high as reported. Available at: <https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR22_09/SR_Climate-mainstreaming_EN.pdf>

As indicated by the auditors, the Commission overstated international climate finance by more than €72 billion, which implies that only 13% of the EU budget allocated for the period 2014-2020 was actually dedicated to climate action. Furthermore, OECD Secretary-General, Mathias Cormann, stated that “Climate finance continued to grow in 2019 but developed countries remain USD 20 billion short of meeting the 2020 goal of mobilising USD 100 billion”, describing the limited progress between 2018 and 2019 as “disappointing”²⁰.

The European Parliament acknowledges in a briefing²¹ that there is significant room for improvement in international climate finance, considering that climate targets are still far from being achieved. However, according to the 2022 Environmental Performance Index (EPI), which offers an evidence-based assessment of global sustainability, the EU Member States generally rank among the top-performing countries. This positive ranking is conceived by the Parliament as a result of the EU's longstanding and ongoing investments in policies aimed at protecting environmental health, preserving biodiversity and habitats, conserving natural resources, and decoupling greenhouse gas emissions from economic growth.

Moreover, in the 2019 Council Conclusions on Climate Finance, it was reiterated that public finance would continue to “play an important role for climate action”, while underlining that there was “the need to better target public finance to leverage more effectively and efficiently private sector funding to finance mitigation and adaptation action, as well as the need to ensure enabling environments”. On the other hand, the Council welcomed the recent developments in the EU, “in particular on the ongoing work on an EU taxonomy for environmentally sustainable economic activities, a voluntary standard for green bonds, new legislation on two new categories of low-carbon benchmarks (EU climate benchmarks) and on disclosures relates to sustainable investments and sustainability risks”.

²⁰ Statement from OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann on climate finance in 2019. Available at: <<https://www.oecd.org/environment/statement-from-oecd-secretary-general-mathias-cormann-on-climate-finance-in-2019.htm>>

²¹ European Parliament's Briefing (2023) Background information for the BUDG-CONT joint workshop on 'The Role of the EU Budget in International Climate Finance' [PE 742.134 – January 2023]. Available at: <[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/742134/IPOL_BRI\(2023\)742134_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/742134/IPOL_BRI(2023)742134_EN.pdf)>

In conclusion, the findings from the experts highlight the need for significant improvements in international and European climate finance activities. Despite the allocation of substantial funds, EU's climate initiatives fell short in demonstrating the impact in countries' mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Nonetheless, the Council Conclusions on Climate Finance highlighted the reinforced efforts in EU's international climate financing, such as the new EU taxonomy and the EU climate benchmarks, which prove and reiterate its commitment to promoting sustainability and supporting initiatives that address climate change and environmental challenges on a global scale.

VI. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

In the discussion and conclusions of this thesis, the previously analysed theoretical framework of the EU's *leadiatorship* will be connected to the examination and findings presented in the main section. Specifically, the three illustrative examples - MoCA meetings, Just Energy Transition Partnerships, and climate financial coordination - will be discussed and analysed in terms of the EU's '*leadiator in action*' role in strengthening global climate actions. This analysis will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the EU's initiatives and its contributions to advancing climate goals on a global scale, which will not only provide a deeper understanding of the EU's '*leadiator in action*' role, but also contribute to the development of key takeaways and recommendations for the future engagement of the EU with third countries. Additionally, the main limitations of the present research paper will be assessed in the last section of this chapter.

6.1 Examination of the EU's role to enhance global cooperation on climate change under the Paris Agreement

The primary aim of this research was to examine the European Union's role in enhancing the implementation of climate commitments in third countries and support global climate action. To achieve this, the EU's *leadiatorship* theoretical background is employed as the guiding lens for the examination of three different illustrative examples of the Union's multifaceted strategies. As presented in the previous chapter, the combination of the political engagement in MoCA, the Just Energy Transition Partnerships and the financial cooperation for climate aid showcase the EU's comprehensive approach to support international climate action, which will be now discussed from a '*leadiatorship in action*' point of view.

From a theoretical perspective, certain expectations were created about the need for the EU to maintain its role as a *leadiator* in global climate implementation, while effectively responding to the challenges posed by the rise of developing powers and the resulting stronger multipolarity. The concept of *leadiator in action* was expected to accurately capture the EU's envisioned role as a leader and mediator in the engagement with third countries for the implementation of international climate action. Combining elements of leadership and mediation (or facilitation in this context), the EU was expected not only

to be able to engage with a multipolar world, but also to lead the implementation of tangible actions. The subsequent points provide an assessment of the EU's role as a *leadiator in action* in each of the analysed actions.

Ministerial on Climate Action: the political engagement

By co-convening MoCA along Canada and China, the European Union demonstrated having a proactive approach to international climate cooperation, showcasing its ability to leverage its diplomatic skills to keep global momentum. This not only enhanced the EU's position as a *leadiator* in global climate governance, but also reinforced its role as a collaborator with main emitter countries in addressing the urgent challenges of climate change.

The formation of MoCA as a response to the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement was the initial testament to the EU's '*leadiator in action*' role. This significant step showcased the EU's proactive leadership in filling the void left by the US, and its collaboration with G20 countries and other developing countries to driving global climate action forward. Following Oberthür and Dupont (2021), the EU reaffirmed its *leadiator* role by reviewing once again its position and identifying the opportunities and needs for coalition and bridge-building that the MoCA could provide. This initiative highlighted the EU's ability to adapt to changing circumstances, foster collaboration among key stakeholders, and effectively respond to the needs and opportunities in the international climate arena.

In the second MoCA meeting, the EU underscored the importance of taking collective action, recognising its own efforts alone would not suffice. As such, Commissioner Arias Cañete reaffirmed the EU's commitment to "lead the way" during the third MoCA, highlighting its intent to drive ambitious climate action. In the fourth and fifth MoCA, the EU demonstrated again its capability of adaptation to the sanitary circumstances, addressing not only environmental concerns, but also the challenges of economic growth and social development in a holistic and mutually supportive manner. To end with, in the last MoCA meetings, despite the difficulties of the actual energy security context derived from the war in Ukraine, the EU managed to exert significant influence in shaping the discussions and decisions to transform global climate policies into concrete actions.

In conclusion, the EU's role during such political engagements demonstrated its proactive leadership and adaptation to complex circumstances. Through mediation, the EU effectively shaped the discourse and decisions, ensuring its perspectives and priorities were central in advancing ambitious climate policies and actions on the global stage.

Just Energy Transition Partnerships: the plurilateral attempt

The EU role as a '*lead actor in action*' was not solely limited to its engagements with other major powers, but also extended to its support for third countries' climate ambitions. The JETPs exemplify the EU's *lead actor* role in advancing global climate action by bridging the gap between developed and developing nations. According to Delbeke and Vis (2021) sharing its extensive policy experience with other countries globally helps achieving effective climate change mitigation and adaptation. Consequently, the role played by the EU in these partnerships is fundamental in the process of green transition of South Africa, Indonesia and Vietnam. As such, the collaboration between the EU and emerging economies has set a powerful example of action, emphasizing the urgent need to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees.

Through the JETPs, the EU showcased its multifaceted role in advancing climate action through a combination of incentives and deterrence. The EU has effectively employed a carrot and stick approach, using both positive incentives and regulatory measures to drive inclusive energy transitions while ensuring that no country or community is left behind. On one hand, the EU offers financial assistance, technical expertise, and capacity-building support to facilitate the implementation of clean energy projects, providing an attractive incentive for participating countries. This approach promotes cooperation, knowledge exchange, and shared benefits, reinforcing the EU's position as a collaborative *lead actor* in the global energy transition. On the other hand, the EU also employs regulatory frameworks and standards that act as a stick, encouraging partner countries to align with international climate goals and adopt sustainable practices. The EU's stringent environmental regulations, coupled with its market access and trade leverage, create pressure for compliance and encourage partner countries to prioritize climate action.

By examining each country's differences and positions and directing international efforts towards a common goal, the EU plays an important *lead actor in action* role within the JETPs. The partnerships provide a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and joint

decision-making, enabling the EU to influence and guide partner countries towards more sustainable and inclusive energy systems. However, it is important to acknowledge the potential limitations and complexities associated with the EU's role, since the Union may not be sufficient on its own to drive transformative actions. Therefore, the EU must carefully calibrate its approach, ensuring a balance between great ambition and flexibility, while considering the specific priorities of partner countries and other public and private stakeholders.

In conclusion, the Joint European Transition Partnerships with countries such as South Africa, Indonesia, and Vietnam add an additional dimension to the EU's *lead actor in action* role. These partnerships not only serve as avenues for climate cooperation but also provide an opportunity for geopolitical analysis, considering the significance of these countries in the context of climate action. As the global community increasingly employs both incentives and regulatory measures to drive climate action, understanding the strategic importance of these countries becomes crucial.

EU cooperation & financial aid: the overall approach

The European Union recognises the importance of public finance in driving climate action and plays a supportive and leadership role in funding initiatives. Yet, after the examination of some instruments, especially the GCCA, the findings of the research indicate that there is a need to strengthen EU's capacity to engage and mobilise private stakeholders to actively contribute to financing climate initiatives. While the EU provides crucial support through supporting public finance and policy frameworks, it recognises the importance to cooperate and attract greater participation, since the EU, in its own, faces again limitations in its capacity to finance all the necessary changes required.

Certainly, addressing the lack of parity between the EU's climate mitigation and adaptation efforts is crucial in assessing its role as a leader in global climate action. While the EU has shown commendable commitment to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and promoting sustainable practices, there is a need for greater attention to the adaptation needs of vulnerable countries facing the impacts of climate change. The EU must recognize the unequal distribution of climate impacts and the varying levels of vulnerability among countries. It is essential for the EU to address both mitigation and adaptation aspects to effectively become a *lead actor* in global climate action.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise the EU's role in "leading by example" when it comes to its domestic impact and the coordination among its Member States. Actions such as an EU taxonomy or the establishment of green bonds demonstrate the EU's commitment to setting high standards and promote sustainable practices within and outside Europe, serving as a model for other regions and entities to follow.

6.2 Key takeaways and recommendations for future EU engagement with third countries

6.2.1 Key takeaways

1.- The EU's continued role as a *leadicator* has evolved into a new form of engagement with third countries known as '*leaditorship in action*'. This transformative approach emphasizes the EU's ability to not only negotiating ambitious climate goals but also ensuring their effective implementation by third countries through concrete actions.

2.- The EU's co-convention of the MoCA demonstrated its proactive *leaditorship in action* in filling the void left by the US and keeping global political climate momentum. By combating some difficulties such as the pandemic or the energy crisis, the EU showcased its adaptability and effectiveness in addressing the challenges of climate change on an international scale.

3.- The JETPs serve as a prime example of the EU's proactive *leaditor in action* role in collaborating with emerging economies to drive ambitious climate action and facilitate the transition to a low-carbon future. By leveraging both incentives and regulatory mechanisms, the EU encourages emerging economies to embrace an inclusive and sustainable decarbonization.

4.- The EU's role in coordinating climate financial aid is instrumental in driving global climate action. Through collaboration with Member States and international partners, the EU leverages collective resources to provide substantial funding for climate mitigation and adaptation projects. The adoption of the *leaditor in action* role facilitates enhanced effectiveness of the EU's climate financial aid, extending its reach and impact on a global scale. This is important taking into account the limited success in this approach.

6.2.2 Recommendations

1.- Keep political commitment: The EU should continue to demonstrate strong political commitment to climate action through high-level participation in the Ministerial on Climate Action. By promoting multilateralism and building consensus among countries with diverse interests, the EU can advance climate ambitions through political engagements.

2.- Strengthening partnerships: The EU should enhance open collaboration with other emerging economies by considering the unique needs and circumstances of each country. The EU can play a pivotal role in accommodating these needs by engaging in comprehensive dialogue and negotiation processes with additional third countries, such as India and Senegal, to ultimately achieve a fair and sustainable outcome.

3.- Strategic Prioritisation: The EU should prioritize additional financial resources towards third countries more strategically, based on their climate vulnerabilities, development needs, and potential for impactful climate action. This can help target resources and efforts where they are most needed and can have the greatest impact.

4.- Coordinated Financial Efforts: The EU should coordinate its climate diplomacy efforts with other international actors, including the private sector, to mobilise finance. By leveraging collective expertise, resources, and influence, coordinated financial efforts can facilitate access to funding for developing countries.

6.3 Limitations

Despite the rigorous approach employed in this research, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations and constraints that may have impacted the findings and interpretations of this study. These limitations, while unavoidable, highlight the boundaries and considerations that must be taken into account when evaluating the results. In this section, the main limitations encountered during the course of this research are discussed, providing transparency and context for the interpretation of our findings.

In the case of the analysis of the MoCA meetings, it is important to note that the available information was mainly limited to official statements, press releases and summaries

provided by participant parties. The lack of complete meeting transcripts and detailed commentary on the roles and difficulties faced by each party has limited the ability to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics and nuances of the discussions. This reliance on publicly available information may have resulted in a somewhat descriptive analysis, and it is acknowledged that a more comprehensive examination could have provided a richer understanding of the EU's role in the meetings. These limitations, however, do not diminish the value of the insights gained from the available sources, but rather highlight the need for caution when interpreting the findings.

Similarly, when examining the Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs), it is important to acknowledge certain limitations in the understanding of the negotiation processes and the diplomatic outcomes between the EU and its partner countries. These partnerships' negotiations often take place behind closed doors, limiting the availability of detailed information regarding the discussions, interests, and difficulties faced by the parties involved. Due to the sensitive nature of EU's external diplomacy and the need to maintain confidentiality, the public documentation and official statements may not fully capture the complexities and specific interests of the partnerships. For instance, a report from the UNOPS and the ETP (2023a) describes the negotiations between Vietnam and the International Partnership for Green Growth as "closed", underscoring the strengthening of the partnership but also pointing to potential challenges related to the lack of transparency. As such, this can restrict the comprehensive understanding of the motivations, concerns, and compromises made by the EU and its partner countries.

Ultimately, in the last section the thesis primarily focuses on the EU's efforts to coordinate climate financial instruments and climate funding for advancing climate action in third countries. While efforts have been made to incorporate a diverse range of examples and sectors, it is important to acknowledge that the coverage may not capture every aspect or account for specific country-level nuances.

Despite these limitations, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the EU's *lead actor in action* role to support climate action in third countries through its diplomatic instruments. It serves as a foundation for further research and policy discussions in this area and highlights the need for continued exploration of the effectiveness and challenges of the EU's actions in supporting climate action at the international level.

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