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His Excellency the  
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## **Future of Lignite Coal in Germany**

Mr Löfven,

We congratulate you on your appointment as Prime Minister of Sweden. The party groups of Alliance 90/The Greens in Brandenburg and Saxony look forward to collaborating closely with the new, progressive Swedish government.

We are writing to you because we attach great value to the European idea and the European Union in equal measure. We especially value the close economic and cultural ties between Sweden and Germany, two prominent examples of which are Vattenfall's investments in Germany and E.on's in Sweden.

In our states of Brandenburg and Saxony Vattenfall mainly operates lignite coalmines and lignite power plants; investments in renewable energies have been put on hold to this day. Its employees value Vattenfall very much as a fair employer.

The economy surrounding lignite coal is highly controversial in our public. Public-opinion polls show that a majority of the German population desires a rapid exit from this form of electricity generation, which is exceptionally harmful to the climate, health and the environment.

Our party groups advocate Vattenfall's continued involvement in Germany but emphasise the need for a change in company policy to bring it in line with sustainability goals. We regret that the Swedish state – as Vattenfall's owner – has so far allowed a company policy, which promotes the opposite of Sweden's own progressive energy policy in such close proximity to home.

The ever-growing need for effective climate protection is a great challenge for our economy and society, which we can only overcome together. We therefore stress in this letter, that we do share the concerns of the Prime Minister of Brandenburg Woidke and the Prime Minister of Saxony Tillich regarding the welfare of the people in the Lusatia. We, however, believe that the

long-term attachment to electricity generation from lignite coal is no solution to the region's problems.

What does it mean when the Swedish government wants to influence Vattenfall in order to "halt the expansion" of the use of lignite coal in eastern Germany?

A continuation of mining and the power generation from lignite coal at its current levels in Brandenburg and Saxony will place an ever-growing strain on the people in the region. It brings with it the development of further surface mining as well as an expansion of the surface mines, an aggravation of the already serious damage to the environment and health issues. Surface mines destroy the landscape and threaten the cultural identity of the Sorbian-Wendish population. Due to the use of lignite coal residents of the region are burdened with dust, mercury and air pollutants. The adjustment made to the ground water for mining purposes has already polluted the river waters in the Lusatia and threatens the drinking water supply of entire regions in the long-term, including a threat to Berlin. If Vattenfall is not to expand the use of lignite coal, it needs to cut back gradually on mining and burning.

Lignite coal is cheap in the short-run and its usage generates a large profit for Vattenfall. However, new investments in lignite coal are economically very risky in the long run. As these investments threaten to prevent an effective climate protection, politics will not get around implementing tougher emission right requirements and further control mechanisms such as e.g. using every possible means in emissions trading to increase the price of lignite coal to therefore take these power plants off the market.

Despite investments in modernisation Vattenfall's power plant Jänschwalde is highly inefficient and one of the largest CO<sub>2</sub>-emitters in Europe. It has been largely written off and can be turned off definitely with the phasing-out of the current surface mine Jänschwalde. In addition, the two oldest blocks in Boxberg and the power plants Schwarze Pumpe and Lippendorf will be operationally written off in the foreseeable future. With an exit from lignite coal mining by the year 2030, solely the newest block, Block R in the power plant Boxberg, would have only been in operation for only 18 years. If the power plants' yearly hours of operation were to reduce as predicted due to the increased generation of electricity from renewables, there are sufficient lignite coal reserves in the current surface mines until the year 2030. An excellent opportunity presents itself for Vattenfall to end power generation from lignite coal at a minimum loss and to change its course towards a sustainable company policy based on renewable energies.

A gradual exit from lignite coal would provide not only Vattenfall with an economic opportunity. The region too would profit from a change towards a sustainable strategy. A well-thought-out change of strategy with an exit from lignite coal until the year 2030 would provide the opportunity to reduce jobs without redundancies – but rather based on age patterns and employee turnover. New jobs for current employees could also be created in the company and the region. The essential land rehabilitation of the surface mines and the growing market of renewable energies and energy services can provide new perspectives for employees through retraining and the Lusatia as a whole. A change of strategy towards more sustainability will provide Vattenfall with new growth perspectives.

The parliamentary party groups of Alliance 90/The Greens in Brandenburg and Saxony support the ambitious European climate change policy. For this purpose, we would like to foster the relationship between Sweden, Brandenburg and Saxony. Vattenfall has much to achieve with a

realignment of its company policy. Please make use of our influence. We will support you, your government and Vattenfall in this endeavour and look forward to a thriving cooperation between Brandenburg, Saxony and Sweden.

Yours sincerely,



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Leader of the party group in Brandenburg



Volkmar Zchoke  
Leader of the party group in Saxony



Heide Schinowsky  
Speaker for Energy Policy in Brandenburg



Gerd Lippold  
Speaker for Energy Policy in Saxony