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Hi, I'm Herman Sips. I work for the Dutch Ministry for the Environment. I've worked for almost ten years on Green Plans and am now working on international environmental issues and green diplomacy.

The green plan for the EU was created in response to obvious problems, and I think we now have the sixth or seventh Environmental Action Program it's called. So it's more of a program than a plan, and it tries to tackle in a semi-comprehensive way the most important issues that we have to deal with. And the important thing is now it is focusing on the things we are not coming to grips with—the real tough issues like climate change, like waste, like human health and air pollution. So that's one track of EU things.

The other one is, building on that, the EU has decided to have seven thematic strategies where you take a look at one issue and try to address that from an integrated perspective. So there is a strategy for financial resources, there is one for air pollution, there is one for waste. So we try to address all the things related to these issues in an integrated way so there would be a sort of add-on or extension to the action program where the action program or the green plan is the basis, and these seven strategies sort of complement that.

There will be two advantages to having this integrated approach. I think one is if you set targets properly it will tie into decisions that business will have to make on investments. It gives greater transparency, greater predictability of future commitments. You can also see how investments in one group relate to the other group so the equity, the effort's shared reasonably, which is always a crucial issue because some people feel we are doing more than the rest. So you can sort of address that issue there by target setting and making that transparent who is going to contribute for what. And the other issue basically is that if you have an integrated approach that you don't shift the problems around, so you're not creating, making, solving one problem by creating another which we've seen in the past, at least both in the EU and in the Netherlands.”