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By AFP.

The European Union's new permanent president Herman Van Rompuy vowed Wednesday to make the fight against climate change and the economic crisis his top priority in the months ahead.

Speaking ahead of a meeting with Chancellor Angela Merkel on his first official visit to Germany, Europe's most populous country and its top economy, Van Rompuy said that the 27-member bloc must strive for two percent average annual growth.

"One thing is clear now. We need economic growth which is sustainable and which is at least two percent, instead of the projected structural growth of one percent... in order to keep up with the other major economies in the world," Van Rompuy said.

He said that a meeting on February 11 would be an opportunity for EU leaders to hold an initial brainstorming session on the economy before more concrete proposals were tabled at an EU summit on March 25-26.

Turning to the climate, Van Rompuy said that while the Copenhagen accord "fell short of EU expectations," the bloc would work to assess the commitments made by various countries at the end of January before deciding how to proceed.

Asked whether he was concerned by the underwhelming response to his surprise appointment, the low-key former prime minister of Belgium said he wanted to be judged by what he achieved, not enthusiasm for him personally.

"I like results... in two-and-a-half years, you can be more enthusiastic," he said.