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General Affairs

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President

Jean Asselborn

Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of
Luxembourg

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

ITEMS DEBATED

Interinstitutional agreement on better law-making

The Council approved the text of a new interinstitutional agreement on better law-making provisionally agreed with the European Parliament and the Commission on 8 December 2015.

For details see [press release](#).

18-month programme of the Council

The Council endorsed the [18-month programme of the Council](#). The programme is drawn up by the incoming trio of presidencies (the Netherlands, Slovakia and Malta) and sets out the Council's activities for the next 18 months. The policy debate was held in public session.

Preparation for the December European Council

The Council examined draft conclusions for the European Council meeting to be held on 17-18 December, prepared by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, in cooperation with the Luxembourg presidency and the Commission.

The European Council is due to focus on:

- migration: the European Council will take stock of the implementation of its earlier orientations and take further action in the light of the situation on the ground;
- fight against terrorism: EU leaders will discuss the overall EU strategy and member states' action in combating terrorism. They will take stock of the implementation of the orientations agreed at their informal meeting on 12 February 2015 and set further orientations;
- economic and monetary union: the European Council will analyse the next steps to take following the publication of the five Presidents' report on completing the Economic and Monetary Union;
- internal market: the European Council will address the strategy to deepen the European single market in all its dimensions; these include goods and services, the digital single market and the capital market union action plan;
- energy union: the European Council will assess progress in building the energy union and set out the way ahead;
- United Kingdom: the European Council will revert to the UK plans for an (in/out) referendum further to the letter of UK Prime Minister of 10 November 2015;

An [annotated draft agenda](#) was discussed by the Council on 17 November 2015.

Enlargement and stabilisation and association process

The Council adopted [conclusions](#) on:

- the EU's enlargement policy, covering Turkey, Montenegro and Serbia;
- the EU-Western Balkans stabilisation and association process, covering the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.

The conclusions reaffirm the Council's commitment to the enlargement process and to the European perspective on the Western Balkans. The Council acknowledged Turkey as a key partner in many areas and welcomed the re-energizing of the accession process.

More generally, it welcomed the Commission's continued efforts to address fundamental reforms early in the accession process. These include rule of law issues, fundamental rights, economic development and competitiveness, the strengthening of democratic institutions and public administration reform.

The Council underscored the need to strengthen the rule of law and protection of fundamental rights, and to reinforce cooperation in fighting terrorism. It commended in particular Turkey, Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for their efforts in addressing the refugee and migration crisis which has seriously affected the region.

Annual growth survey

The Commission presented its [annual growth survey for 2016](#) to the Council, in which it outlines the main features of its jobs and growth agenda.

The annual growth survey sets out what more can be done at EU level to help member states support growth, reinforce economic convergence, create jobs and strengthen social fairness. The Commission proposes to pursue an integrated approach to economic policy built around three main pillars: boosting investment, accelerating structural reforms and pursuing responsible growth-friendly fiscal consolidation.

Any other business

- *EU strategy for the Alpine region*

The Slovenian delegation informed the Council about the conference to launch the EU strategy for the Alpine region, which is to be held on 25 and 26 January 2016 in Brdo.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

ENERGY

Off-site nuclear emergency preparedness and response

The Council adopted the following conclusions on "Off-site nuclear emergency preparedness and response", as set out in [14045/15](#):

"The Council of the European Union:

REAFFIRMING the paramount importance of protecting citizens effectively against the effects of ionising radiation in case of an emergency, including those of nuclear origin,

AWARE of the fact that emergency preparedness and response (EP&R) arrangements have been established for many years in the EU Member States and are tested and exercised regularly,

RECOGNISING that arrangements and measures applicable to nuclear emergencies may also apply to other radiological emergencies,

ACKNOWLEDGING that the provision of EP&R arrangements is a national responsibility, yet bearing in mind that the consequences of a nuclear accident can go beyond national borders,

STRESSING the need for coherent protective measures along adjacent national borders to protect populations against the effects of ionising radiation in case of an emergency, as a necessary condition for the effectiveness of emergency management,

STRESSING the benefits of involving civil society in preparedness activities, in particular when organising nuclear and radiological emergency exercises, to increase transparency and public participation, and to improve public confidence in the arrangements,

BELIEVING that actions to improve off-site nuclear EP&R issues require bringing together the key competent authorities in the Member States, drawn from nuclear safety regulators, radiation protection experts and regulators, technical support organisations and mainly civil protection authorities,

STRESSING the importance of mutual assistance systems at EU level, to make the best use of specialised resources and capabilities in case of an emergency and to bring them into action quickly, taking account of existing mechanisms such as RANET and national systems,

REAFFIRMING the commitment of Member States, the European Union and Euratom to improve response, including cross-border coordination, to nuclear emergencies,

RECALLING Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom containing several provisions applicable to emergency preparedness and response, Council Directive 2014/87/Euratom requiring Member States to ensure that an organisational structure for on-site emergency preparedness and response is established, supplementing in this way the requirements of Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom, Council Decision 87/600/Euratom on Community arrangements for the early exchange of information in the event of a radiological emergency and Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism,

RECALLING the Convention on Nuclear Safety¹, the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management², the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency³ and the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident⁴,

RECALLING that according to Article 99 of Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom, Member States shall cooperate with other Member States and with third countries in addressing possible emergencies on their territory which may affect other Member States or third countries, in order to facilitate the organisation of radiological protection in those Member States or third countries,

RECOGNISING the work on improved cross-border approaches to coordinate protective measures in case of a nuclear accident, which has been carried out by national experts, competent authorities and regulators in the framework of HERCA and WENRA,

STRESSING Member States' effort to implement Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom and therefore to enhance international cooperation concerning the management of an emergency with cross-border consequences,

RECOGNISING that the transposition and implementation of Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom gives an opportunity to improve mutual understanding and to revisit existing arrangements, achieving thus greater coherence of EP&R in the EU,

¹ IAEA INFCIRC/449

² IAEA INFCIRC/546

³ IAEA INFCIRC/336

⁴ IAEA INFCIRC/335

1. INVITES the Commission to:

- organise workshops to facilitate the consistent transposition and-implementation of Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom, aiming at developing a coherent approach to EP&R provisions of the directive, particularly between neighbouring Member States as well as with neighbouring third countries, including notably on the following radiation protection subjects:
 - Protection strategies and optimisation approaches, including the use of reference levels,
 - Generic criteria, operational criteria, default triggers,
 - Arrangements for the transition from emergency to existing exposure situation,
 - Emergency response arrangements and information to the public,
- report to the Council on the progress with the implementation of those provisions of Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom applicable to EP&R, following its transposition,
- inform neighbouring third countries about provisions established in Directive 2013/59/Euratom aimed to strengthen EP&R in the Member States,

2. INVITES Member States to:

- take account of the work carried out by national experts, competent authorities and regulators on improved cross-border approaches to protective measures in case of a nuclear accident, as appropriate and according to the national circumstances, when transposing and implementing the provisions of Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom,
- cooperate closely when establishing or reviewing existing emergency planning zones around nuclear power plants where such zones extend up to or beyond the borders of a Member State,
- exchange information about planned or implemented measures for precautionary purposes to minimise long-term consequences at distances beyond the emergency planning zones, where such distances extend up to or beyond the borders of a Member State, taking into consideration local specificities, technical parameters of the installation and existing cross-border cooperation arrangements,

- intensify their efforts to regularly organise together with the concerned neighbouring Member States, joint training sessions and nuclear emergency exercises representative of real emergency situations and assuring the commitment of all relevant stakeholders, with the objective of testing cross-border arrangements. Such training and exercises should aim to mutually share experience, promote good practice, exchange the findings and continuously improve the effectiveness of EP&R arrangements, whilst making use of existing international mechanisms such as ConvEX and/or INEX if appropriate, and as well as the European Community Urgent Radiological Information Exchange (ECURIE) system and the European Radioactivity Data Exchange Platform (EURDEP),
 - inform, as appropriate, the Commission of the schedule and outcomes of such training and exercises,
 - exchange country-specific factsheets, taking into account, as appropriate, the IAEA Emergency Preparedness and Response Information Management System (EPRIMS), to increase knowledge of each other's EP&R arrangements,
 - maintain and develop, where necessary, bilateral arrangements for better cross-border coordination of protective measures during the response to a nuclear accident,
 - include the alignment of protective measures along borders as a factor in emergency decision-making in accordance with the optimised protection strategy,
 - consider the principle that in the first hours of an accident, applied protective measures take into account those applied in the Member State where the accident has occurred, based on the information received from that Member State, taking into account Article 99 (2) of Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom."
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