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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3676th Council meeting

Environment

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Presidents

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¹ • 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>).
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ITEMS DEBATED

THE EU'S LONG-TERM CLIMATE STRATEGY

The Council held a policy debate on the communication for a strategic long-term vision for a climate neutral economy which the Commission published on 28 November 2018.

Two of the 8 scenarios proposed by the Commission spell out how the EU could reach net-zero emissions by 2050. The Commission's vision for a climate-neutral future covers nearly all economic sectors and is in line with the Paris Agreement objective of keeping the temperature increase to well below 2°C, and pursuing efforts to keep it to 1.5°C.

At the European Council meeting on 14 December 2018, heads of state agreed the following conclusions: "Further to the presentation of the Commission Communication 'A Clean Planet for all' and taking into account the outcome of COP24 in Katowice, the European Council invites the Council to work on the elements outlined in the Communication to enable the European Union to submit a long term strategy by 2020 in line with the Paris Agreement. The European Council will provide guidance on the overall direction and political priorities in the first semester of 2019."

Ministers responded to the following questions posed by the presidency:

- Based on your evaluation/analysis at national level of the efforts needed to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement, which elements of the long-term vision are the most important with regard to the challenges and/or opportunities of the transition to a climate-neutral economy in a socially fair and cost-efficient manner? What kind of policies or tools at EU level could help to address the specific challenges?
- The investments required to achieve the transition will mostly need to come from the private sector. What kind of enabling framework is needed to stimulate the necessary investments, among others in new technologies through research, innovation and development, as well as in education and training, including reskilling and upskilling of the workforce?

Several ministers welcomed the fact that the discussion was led in an inclusive manner, involving several Council formations – such as energy, transport, competitiveness and agriculture – as well as stakeholders in order to reach a shared vision for the EU and to ensure broad support for climate action.

The presidency concluded that the discussion constituted an important contribution to further work on this file. Further ministerial discussions will take place taking into account the guidance from the European Council. The Presidency will summarise the outcome of the sectoral debates in a letter to the President of the European Council.

[Presidency note \(6347/19\)](#)

[Draft agenda of the European Council meeting \(21 and 22 March 2019\)](#)

[Communication from the Commission: A Clean Planet for all. A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy](#)

[In-depth analysis accompanying the Communication from the Commission](#)

[Questions and Answers: Long term strategy for Clean Planet for All](#)

[European Council conclusions of 22 March 2018](#)

DRINKING WATER

The Council reached a general approach on the directive on the quality of water intended for human consumption (recast), also known as the drinking water directive.

With the aim of providing the best level of protection of human health from the adverse effects of any contamination of drinking water, the agreed compromise text sets these hygienic requirements through implementing acts. The implementing acts will lay down:

- European positive lists of starting substances or compositions authorised for use in manufacturing materials in contact with water such as pipes;
- Common methodologies for testing and accepting such substances or compositions;
- Procedures and methods for testing and accepting materials in their final form;
- The procedure for applications to include or remove starting substances and compositions from the European positive lists;
- A marking for products in contact with drinking water indicating conformity with the drinking water directive.

The agreement reached will form the basis for discussions with the European Parliament.

[Press release](#)

[General approach](#)

Commission proposal ([5846/18](#) + [ADD 1-5](#))

GREENING THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER

In the context of the European Semester process, ministers exchanged views based on a Presidency note.

1. How could sustainability be more effectively taken into account in post-2020 investments, in particular those using EU and national budgets? What kind of tools should be developed at national level in order to ensure sustainable investments?
2. How can the transition towards a greener economy be supported through the appropriate environmental/administrative reforms?

Ministers underlined that well-targeted public and private investment should go hand in hand with structural reforms in order to move towards a low-carbon circular economy in support of long-term sustainability.

The Presidency will incorporate the key messages of this debate in a synthesis report for the European Council.

[Presidency's note for the exchange of views \(6260/19\)](#)

[Draft agenda of the European Council meeting \(21 and 22 March 2019\)](#)

ENDOCRINE DISRUPTORS

Ministers had a policy debate on the Commission's communication on the European Union framework on endocrine disruptors. Following recent updates of the legislation on pesticides and biocides to include the specific provisions on endocrine disruptors, this communication aims to address endocrine disruptors more comprehensively and consistently in a broader scope of areas.

The presidency asked ministers to share their views on the following two questions:

- Based on the experience with the application of the EU sectoral chemicals legislation aiming to protect human health and the environment, what in your view is the best approach to develop a coherent EU framework on endocrine disruptors?
- What are the concrete short-term actions that could be taken in order to speed up the implementation of the commitments undertaken in the 7th Environmental Action Programme and the achievement of its objectives?

A number of member states have already developed national strategies to address endocrine disruptors amid growing concerns over their negative impacts on health and the environment. Ministers emphasised the need for an ambitious, timely and well-defined strategy on endocrine disruptors to ensure a high level of protection of EU citizens and the environment by minimising exposure to these harmful chemicals.

Ministers welcomed the Commission Communication as leading the way to a European Union strategy on this important topic, and they looked forward to a fitness check of relevant legislation to be carried out by the European Commission. The policy debate provided political guidance for further work on endocrine disruptors.

[Commission communication](#)

OTHER TOPICS ON THE AGENDA

- ***Regulation amending regulation 2015/757 in order to take appropriate account of the global data collection system for ship fuel oil consumption data***
 - Information from the Commission ([6117/19 + ADD1-3](#))
- ***Better enforcement of the EU phase-down for hydrofluorocarbons***
 - Information from the Commission ([6455/19](#))
- ***Environmental protection policies to combat depopulation in rural areas and to improve quality of life***
 - Information from the Spanish delegation ([6871/19](#))
- ***Preparations of the upcoming meeting of the Barcelona Convention***
 - Information from the Italian delegation ([6875/19](#))
- ***Outcomes of the recently held meeting of the ESPOO Convention***
 - Information from the Presidency and the Commission ([6790/19](#))
- ***Tackling greenhouse gas emissions by aviation pricing***
 - Information from the Belgian delegation ([6636/19](#))
- ***Strengthening coherence between EU free trade agreements and the Paris Agreement on climate change***
 - Information from the French, Spanish and Luxembourg delegations ([7016/19](#))

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

ENVIRONMENT

Conclusions on the ECA's special report on the floods directive

The Council adopted conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No. [25/2018](#), entitled "Floods directive: progress in assessing risks, while planning and implementation need to improve" (6538/19).

The floods directive, which aims at reducing and managing the risks that floods pose to human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity, is one of the main EU legislative instruments on water policy.

The Council welcomes the special report and acknowledges the observations and recommendations as a timely and important contribution to the ongoing fitness check of the water framework directive and the floods directive.

Conclusions on Zimbabwe's position regarding the African lion, the leopard and the giraffe

The Council adopted conclusions on a draft EU letter, expressing objection to the reservation by Zimbabwe to include the African lion, the leopard and the giraffe in Appendix II of the Convention of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (6546/19).

The reservation by Zimbabwe was received after the deadline. The Council found that it was important to uphold the decision to include the three species in Appendix II of the Convention and to adhere to the rules concerning its functioning.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

UfM - Draft ministerial statement, ministers of employment and labour

The Employment and Labour Ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) will gather at their fourth Ministerial Conference at Cascais in Portugal on 2 and 3 April 2019.

The Council agreed on the draft ministerial statement for this meeting.

TRADE

Screening of foreign direct investments

The Council adopted a regulation establishing a framework for the screening of foreign direct investments into the EU. This is the first time that the EU has equipped itself with such a comprehensive framework, while its major trading partners already have comparable rules in place.

For further information, see [press release](#)

Council Decision on the conclusion of EU-25 GATS agreements

The Council adopted a Council decision on the conclusion of the relevant agreements under Article XXI of the General Agreement on Trade in Services with Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu (Chinese Taipei), Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Hong Kong China, India, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines, Switzerland and the United States, on the necessary compensatory adjustments resulting from the accession of Czechia, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden to the European Union ([14020/18](#) + [ADD 1-17](#)).

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Taxation

The Council adopted a decision authorising France to apply a reduced rate of taxation to unleaded petrol used as motor fuel and consumed in Corsican departments. ([6651/19](#), [6272/19](#)).

FISHERIES

Western Waters multiannual management plan: Council adoption

The Council adopted a regulation establishing a multiannual plan for stocks fished in the Western Waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks. This regulation sets out new, longerterm rules to manage fishing activities in a basin which comprise both the North and South Western Waters, and the waters around Madeira and the Canary Islands.

More information in the [press release](#)

European Fisheries Control Agency

The Council adopted a regulation codifying rules on the European Fisheries Control Agency ([PE-CONS 79/18](#)).

The purpose of this regulation is to undertake a codification of Council regulation 768/2005 of 26 April 2005 establishing a European Fisheries Control Agency and amending regulation 2847/93 establishing a control system applicable to the common fisheries policy. The new regulation will supersede the various acts incorporated in it, while fully preserving the content of the acts being codified.

AGRICULTURE

Application of public health requirements of imports of food: transitional period

The Council decided not to oppose a Commission regulation laying down transitional measures for the application of public health requirements of imports of food containing both products of plant origin and processed products of animal origin (composite products - [5751/19](#)).

The objective of the regulation is to establish a single date of application for the new import conditions for composite products covered by Article 6(4) of regulation 853/2004, thereby extending the end of these transitional measures to 20 April 2021.

Pesticides: maximum residue levels for various substances

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending annexes II, III and IV to regulation 396/2005 as regards maximum residue levels for clothianidin, cycloxydim, epoxiconazole, flonicamid, haloxyfop, mandestrobin, mepiquat, Metschnikowia fructicola strain NRRL Y-27328 and prohexadione in or on certain products ([5599/19](#) + [ADD 1](#) + [ADD 2](#))

TRANSPORT

Train drivers' certification

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption by the Commission of a regulation amending annex VI to directive 2007/59/EC on the certification of train drivers operating locomotives and trains on the railway system in the Community ([6375/19](#), [15334/18](#)).

The Commission regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the regulation, unless the European Parliament objects.

INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY**Goods package: mutual recognition**

The Council adopted a regulation on the mutual recognition of goods lawfully marketed in another member state and repealing regulation 764/2008 ([PE-CONS 70/18](#); [6550/1/19 REV 1](#) + [REV 1 ADD 1](#)). For more information, see the press release issued in connection with the provisional agreement with the European Parliament: [EU moves to bolster free movement of goods through extended mutual recognition](#) (press release 22/11/2018).

Recognition of professional qualifications

The Council decided not to object to a Commission delegated decision amending annex V to the directive on the recognition of professional qualifications (2005/36/EC) as regards the evidence of formal qualifications and titles of training courses ([6583/19](#); [5991/19](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the act can enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects to it.

Annexes III and V - cosmetic products

The Council decided not to object to a Commission regulation amending regulation 1223/2009 on cosmetic products as regards the allowed concentration of a substance called Climbazole.

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. It can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects. ([6319/19](#))

Annex VI - cosmetic products

The Council decided not to object to a Commission regulation amending regulation 1223/2009 on cosmetic products as regards the allowed concentration of Phenylene Bis-Diphenyltriazine for use as a UV filter in sunscreen products and other cosmetic products.

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. It can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects. ([6325/19](#))
