

Environment Council

Brussels, 17 December 2020

Chair: **Svenja Schulze**, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany

European Commission representatives: Executive Vice-President of the Commission **Frans Timmermans** and Commissioner **Virginijus Sinkevičius**

Starting time: 09:15

This last Council meeting under the German Presidency will be a physical meeting, held in public session throughout the meeting.

European Environment Ministers will aim to reach a general approach on the Commission proposal for a **European climate law**, including the new EU greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of at least 55% by 2030 following the guidance of the European Council given on 11 December. The primary aim of the European climate law is to set into legislation the objective of a climate neutral EU by 2050.

The Council will also aim to adopt the submission on the **Nationally Determined Contribution** (NDC) to the UNFCCC of the EU and its member states. The submission is set to include the updated emissions reduction target for 2030.

Environment Ministers will also seek to adopt a general approach on a proposal to amend the **Aarhus Regulation** on access to justice in environmental affairs.

The Council aims to approve conclusions on making the recovery from COVID-19 circular and green as a response the European Commission's **new Circular Economy Action Plan** as well as a set of conclusions on digitalisation for the benefit of the environment.

Environment Ministers will also exchange views on the Commission's newly presented **Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability**.

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

Under any **other business**, the Commission will present its new proposal on batteries and waste batteries. The Commission will inform Ministers on a call for urgent action regarding the ratification of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). Portugal will provide delegations with information on the European Conference "Climate change and the European water dimension – Enhancing resilience" (4-5 November 2020). Spain will inform Ministers about the Report on the annual meeting of the Commission for the conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) (27-30 October 2020). France will provide information to delegations on the elimination of deforestation. Finally, the incoming Portuguese Presidency will present its work programme for the first half of 2021.

Press conference: at the end of the meeting, +/- 18.30

* * *

[Environment Council - meeting page](#)

[Press conferences and public events by video streaming](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

* * *

European climate law

The Council will have a discussion in public session on the proposal for a regulation on the European climate law.

The **European Council endorsed a new emissions reduction target of at least 55% by 2030 on 11 December 2020**. The European Council invited the Council and the European Parliament to reflect this new target in the European climate law proposal and to adopt it swiftly.

The aim of the discussion of Environment Ministers at their meeting on 17 December is therefore **to reach a general approach on the European climate law, that includes the updated and enhanced target for 2030**.

The proposal is part of the actions announced in the Commission's European Green Deal Communication, and **aims to establish in legislation the objective of a climate neutral EU**, which was endorsed by the European Council in its conclusions of 12 December 2019.

The Commission presented its initial proposal to ministers at the Environment Council on 5 March 2020 and an amended proposal with an updated emissions reduction target for 2030 on 14 October.

> [Partial general approach](#)

> European Council conclusions, 10-11 December 2020 ([press release, 11 December 2020](#))

> European Council conclusions, 15-16 October 2020 ([press release, 16 October 2020](#))

> European Council conclusions, 12 December 2019 ([press release, 12 December 2019](#))

> [Strategic agenda adopted by the European Council on 20 June 2019](#)

> [Amended proposal for a European climate law by the European Commission](#)

> [Original proposal for a European climate law by the European Commission](#)

> [Commission communication on 'Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition'](#)+ [ADD 1](#), [ADD 2](#), [ADD3](#), [ADD 4](#)

> Climate change: What the EU is doing ([background information](#))

Access to Justice

Environment ministers will have a discussion, in public session, on **a proposal amending the Aarhus Regulation**. The Aarhus Regulation (EC) No 1367/2006 sets out how the EU and its member states implement the international Aarhus Convention, which aims to guarantee access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters.

The Council will aim to reach a **general approach on the proposal**.

The proposal responds to findings by the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee in case C-32 of 2008 concerning the EU's compliance with the Convention.

The proposal foresees in particular a broadening of the scope of acts for which a request for review can be addressed to the Community institutions and bodies. It also extends the deadlines for such requests, thereby facilitating the use of the procedure.

- > [Draft general approach](#)
- > [Regulation \(EU\) No 1367/2006 "Aarhus regulation"](#)
- > [Findings and recommendations of the Compliance Committee with regard to communication ACCC/C/2008/32](#)
- > [List of documents available regarding ACCC/C/2008/32](#)
- > [Aarhus Convention](#)

NDC of the EU and its member states

The Council will also aim to adopt the submission on the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the UNFCCC of the EU and its member states. The submission is set to include the updated emissions reduction target for 2030.

NDCs set out the efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. They are an essential part of the obligations to be fulfilled by Parties under the Paris Agreement. The EU submits one NDC on behalf of the EU and its member states.

- > [European Council conclusions of 10-11 December 2020](#)
- > [Long term plan submission to the UNFCCC on behalf of the European Union and its Member States](#)

Circular Economy Action Plan

The Council will aim to adopt conclusions on "Making the recovery circular and green" as a response to the Commission's new Circular Economy Action Plan presented in March 2020.

The draft conclusions provide comprehensive political guidance in taking forward the multitude of initiatives foreseen by the Commission.

The new Circular Economy Action Plan represents a step up in widening and deepening the efforts towards achieving a circular economy where economic growth is decoupled from the use of resources, and which can contribute significantly to achieving climate neutrality. It has the potential for spurring innovation and entrepreneurship and creating jobs, including at the local level, and for strengthening the resilience of our economies through the optimisation of the use of resources, including raw materials, across the value chain.

- > Draft Council conclusions ["Making the recovery circular and green"](#)
- > [Commission Communication and Annex "A new Circular Economy Action Plan for a cleaner and more competitive Europe"](#)
- > Commission Communication [A New Industrial Strategy for Europe](#)
- > Commission Communication and roadmap on the [European Green Deal](#)
- > Commission Communication [Shaping Europe's digital future](#)

Digitalisation for the benefit of the environment

The aim of these Council conclusions is to consider the twin societal challenge of "digital transformation" and "green transition" together and to contribute to building the necessary bridges between them.

- > [Draft Council conclusions](#)
- > Commission Communication [A New Industrial Strategy for Europe](#)
- > Commission Communication and roadmap on the [European Green Deal](#)
- > Commission Communication [Shaping Europe's digital future](#)

Communication on the EU chemicals strategy for sustainability

In public session, will Environment Ministers will exchange views on the EU chemicals strategy for sustainability to ministers.

- > [Commission's chemicals strategy for sustainability](#)

Any other business

The Commission will present its new proposal on batteries and waste batteries.

> [Information from the Commission](#)

The Commission will inform Ministers on a call for urgent action regarding the ratification of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

Portugal will provide delegations with information on the European Conference "Climate change and the European water dimension – Enhancing resilience" (4-5 November 2020).

France will provide information to delegations on the elimination of deforestation.

Finally, the incoming Portuguese Presidency will present its work programme for the first half of 2021.
