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PRESS RELEASE

3363rd Council meeting

Environment

Brussels, 17 December 2014

President

Gian Luca GALLETTI

Minister for the Environment, the Protection of Natural
Resources and the Sea of Italy

P R E S S

Main results of the Council

CO2 emissions from ships

The Council reached a political agreement on the regulation setting out new EU-wide rules for monitoring, reporting and verification of **CO2 emissions from ships**. "The new rules on CO2 emissions in maritime transport - said the Italian Minister for the Environment and President of the Council, Gian Luca Galletti - are an example of effective protection of the environment since agreement was reached on a text that introduces for the first time a uniform system of monitoring, reporting and verification of carbon dioxide emissions from shipping. In addition, we have chosen procedures that minimise the burden for the actors and promote efficient maritime transport."

Plastic bags

The Council reached a political agreement on a draft directive to reduce the consumption of lightweight **plastic bags**. The new rules aim to limit the negative environmental impacts of litter from plastic carrier bags by encouraging waste prevention and a more efficient use of resources.

Minister Galletti said: "The Environment Council formalised today a significant political agreement between the EU institutions on the reduction of the use of plastic bags. With this directive, the EU gives itself an important tool to advance towards a circular economy. The new rules make it possible to reduce waste, in this case lightweight plastic bags, while promoting more efficient use of resources and thus having a positive impact on the economy."

Medium combustion plants

The Council reached a general approach on a draft directive on the limitation of emissions of certain pollutants into the air from **medium combustion plants**.

Commission work programme 2015

The Council addressed the Commission's recent announcements on its 2015 work programme. The Council stressed the importance of continuing work on the **circular economy package** and on the waste review in particular, building on the work done so far. Ministers also stressed that the transition towards a circular economy is key to boosting growth and jobs. On this occasion the Council also underlined the need to keep working on all the elements of the **clean air package**.

Climate change

The Council confirmed a political agreement on the **Doha amendment ratification package** with a view to enabling its ratification and its technical implementation. Minister Galletti commented: "With this agreement to kick off the second round of commitments for the Kyoto Protocol, Europe sends a clear signal of unity and cohesion ahead of Paris 2015. With the same sense of responsibility shown in Lima, the EU will continue to promote policies to tackle climate change."

Post-2015 agenda

The UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner, was present for the Council's discussions on the latest developments and prospects for the negotiations on the **post-2015 agenda**, which should define the new global framework for poverty eradication and sustainable development, to be adopted at the UN General Assembly summit in September 2015.

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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.

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PARTICIPANTS

Belgium:

Ms Céline FREMAULT

Minister of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region, responsible for Housing, Quality of Life, Environment and Energy

Bulgaria:

Ms Ivelina VASSILEVA

Minister for the Environment and Water

Czech Republic:

Mr Richard BRABEC

Minister for the Environment

Denmark:

Ms Kirsten BROSBØL

Minister for the Environment

Mr Rasmus HELVEG PETERSEN

Minister for Climate, Energy and Building

Germany:

Mr Jochen FLASBARTH

State Secretary, Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety

Estonia:

Ms Clyde KULL

Deputy Permanent Representative

Ireland:

Mr Tom HANNEY

Deputy Permanent Representative

Greece:

Mr Andreas PAPASTAVROU

Deputy Permanent Representative

Spain:

Ms Isabel GARCIA TEJERINA

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Environment

France:

Ms Ségolène ROYAL

Minister for Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy

Croatia:

Mr Mihael ZMAJLOVIĆ

Minister for the Protection of the Environment and Nature

Italy:

Mr Gianluca GALLETTI

Minister for the Environment, the Protection of Natural Resources and the Sea

Cyprus:

Mr Nicos KOUYIALIS

Minister for Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment

Latvia:

Mr Kaspars GERHARDS

Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development

Lithuania:

Mr Kęstutis TREČIOKAS

Minister for the Environment

Luxembourg:

Ms Carole DIESCHBOURG

Minister for the Environment

Hungary:

Mr István NAGY

Parliamentary State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture
Deputy Permanent Representative

Mr Olivér VÁRHELYI

Malta:

Mr Leo BRINCAT

Minister for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change

Netherlands:

Ms Wilma MANSVELD

State Secretary for Infrastructure and the Environment

Austria:

Mr Andrä RUPPRECHTER

Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, the Environment and Water Management

Poland:

Mr Sebastian BARKOWSKI

Deputy Permanent Representative

Portugal:

Mr Paulo LEMOS

State Secretary for the Environment

Romania:

Mr Doina CATRINOIU

Undersecretary of State

Slovenia:

Ms Irena MAJCEN

Minister for the Environment and Spatial Planning

Slovakia:

Mr Ján ILAVSKÝ

State Secretary at the Ministry of the Environment

Finland:

Ms Marianne HUUSKO-LAMPONEN

Deputy Permanent Representative

Sweden:

Ms Yvonne RUWAIDA

State Secretary

United Kingdom:

Mr Dan ROGERSON

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Water,
Forestry, Rural Affairs and Resource Management

Ms Amber RUDD

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Climate
Change, Department of Energy and Climate Change

.....

Commission:

Mr Karmenu VELLA

Member

Mr Miguel ARIAS CAÑETE

Member

Mr Neven MIMICA

Member

ITEMS DEBATED

Monitoring of CO2 emissions from ships

The Council reached a [political agreement](#) on the regulation setting out new EU-wide rules for monitoring, reporting and verification of CO2 emissions from ships.

The new mechanism for monitoring, reporting and verification of CO2 emissions from ships is a building block towards the implementation of the 2030 framework and, at the same time, a contribution to the international negotiations at the International Maritime Organisation, aimed at a global monitoring, reporting and verification system.

The political agreement follows the agreement reached with the European Parliament on 18 November in informal trilogues. The Permanent Representatives Committee endorsed the text on 26 November, while the European Parliament's Environment Committee endorsed it on 3 December. The formal adoption of a Council common position will follow the legal linguists' verification of the text in the months ahead.

See [press release](#).

Doha amendment ratification package

Ministers examined the Doha amendment ratification package, proposed by the Commission in November 2013, with a view to enabling its ratification and its technical implementation. A timely ratification in 2015 would enhance the credibility of the EU and its member states in the UN climate negotiations.

In this context, the Council confirmed political agreement on:

- a decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the agreement between the EU and its member states of the one part, and Iceland, of the other part, concerning Iceland's participation in the joint fulfilment of commitments of the European Union, its member states and Iceland for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

- a decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the agreement between the EU and its member states, of the one part, and Iceland, of the other part, concerning Iceland's participation in the joint fulfilment of commitments of the European Union, its members states and Iceland for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and
- a decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the joint fulfilment of commitments thereunder.

These texts will now undergo legal-linguistic revision and be sent to Coreper/Council for adoption and agreement in principle respectively by mid January 2015. The texts will subsequently be transmitted to the European Parliament for its consent.

At the Doha climate change conference in December 2012, the 192 Parties to the Kyoto Protocol adopted this amendment, which establishes that the EU, its member states and Iceland accept a quantified emission reduction commitment that limits their average annual emissions to 80% of their base-year emissions during the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2020). It also sets 2015 as the deadline for the development of a successor document to be implemented from 2020. The Doha amendment will enter into force once three quarters of the 192 Parties have ratified it. Ratification of the Doha agreement by the EU and its member states is necessary to help ensure its formal entry into force as an international agreement.

For more information see [UN website](#).

Plastic bags

The Council reached a [political agreement](#) on a draft directive to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic bags.

The new rules aim to limit the negative environmental impacts of litter from plastic carrier bags by encouraging waste prevention and a more efficient use of resources.

The agreement with the European Parliament on the text was reached at an informal trilogue on 17 November. The Permanent Representatives Committee unanimously approved the agreement on 21 November. A formal common position will be adopted at a later stage, after the legal linguists have checked the text.

See [press release](#).

Medium combustion plants

The Council reached a [general approach](#) on a draft directive on the limitation of emissions of certain pollutants into the air from medium combustion plants.

The new directive is intended to cover, for the first time, medium-sized combustion plants with a rated thermal input between 1 and 50 MW. These plants are a major source of emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and particulate matter (dust). The aim of the proposal is to improve air quality and human health.

The general approach will provide a basis on which the incoming Latvian Presidency of the Council will start negotiations with the European Parliament next year. The European Parliament's Environment Committee is expected to vote on the proposal in April 2015.

See [press release](#).

Post-2015 agenda

The Council discussed recent developments and next steps regarding the post-2015 agenda, the new framework for the international community's efforts towards poverty eradication and sustainable development. The United Nations Environment Programme's Executive Director Mr Achim Steiner delivered a keynote speech at the meeting.

Ministers expressed their views on what is needed in the global post-2015 agenda to fully integrate the environmental dimension of sustainable development. They underlined, in particular, the need to keep a balance between all three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental dimension, which are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

The EU and its member states are committed to an ambitious, transformative and inclusive post-2015 agenda. Negotiations at the UN are underway to prepare the conference on financing for development in July 2015 and the UN summit on the post-2015 development agenda in September 2015, building on the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The EU's latest overall position is set out in the Council conclusions adopted by the General Affairs Council on 16 December (16716/14).

The Commission welcomed the Council conclusions. It called on the EU to speak with one voice, to remain in the lead of the sustainable development process and to table a good proposal in terms of financial and non-financial means of implementation. In addition, it outlined the main elements of its forthcoming communication on the post-2015 global partnership to be presented in 2015.

Any other business– ***Market stability reserve***

The presidency briefed ministers on the state of play on a draft decision of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the establishment and operation of a market stability reserve for the Union greenhouse gas emission trading scheme (ETS) and took note of the comments made by the Commission and delegations ([16360/14](#)).

The aim of the proposal is to address the current market imbalance in the ETS and to improve its resilience to future unexpected and sudden demand shocks. The October European Council stated that a well-functioning, reformed emission trading scheme with an instrument to stabilise the market in line with the Commission proposal will be the main European instrument to achieve the EU's new 2030 greenhouse gas reduction target.

Considerable progress has been made on the proposal through the identification and focused discussion of the following key issues: the start of the implementation of the market stability reserve and the treatment of backloaded allowances; conditions for the removal of allowances from the reserve and their return to the market; response time of the reserve and the frequency of its review. Work on this proposal will continue under the Latvian Presidency.

The European Parliament's Environment Committee vote will take place in February 2015.

– ***Main recent international meetings and events***

The presidency and the Commission briefed ministers on the outcome of the main recent international meetings and events.

The briefing included in particular:

- 6th session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Mercury (INC6) (Bangkok, 3-7 November 2014) ([16691/14](#)). For more information visit the [website](#).
- 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP11) (Quito, 4-9 November 2014) ([15726/14](#)). For more information visit the [website](#).

- Joint 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the 26th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol (COP 10-MOP 26) (Paris, 17-21 November 2014) ([16215/14](#)). For more information visit the [website](#).
- 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Helsinki Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (COP8) (Geneva, 3-5 December 2014) ([16806/14](#)). For more information visit the [website](#).
- 20th session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change and 10th session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP 20-CMP 10) (Lima, 1-12 December 2014). For more information visit the [website](#).
- ***Charter of Rome on Natural and Cultural Capital***

The presidency presented the "Charter of Rome on Natural and Cultural Capital" ([16540/14](#)) to the Council.

The charter of Rome is a bridging initiative on the interrelations and interactions between Natural and Cultural Capital. It aims at strengthening nature and biodiversity policy, mainstreaming it into other policies related to the territory and the economy. EU Nature Directors supported the Charter at their informal meeting held last November in Rome.

- ***Key issues in chemicals policy on the road to a non-toxic environment***

The Austrian, Belgian, Danish, German, French, Netherlands and Swedish delegations briefed the Council on a number of key issues in chemicals policy which need to be addressed to achieve the long-term goal of a non-toxic environment. The initiative was supported by the Croatian and Luxembourg delegations, subsequently joined by the Greek delegation, and by Norway ([16361/14](#)).

According to these delegations, the key issues to be addressed as a priority relate to minimising or substituting the use of substances of concern, endocrine disruptors, nanomaterials, substances in articles and imported products, and improving the quality of REACH registrations.

– ***Elimination of micro-plastics in products – an urgent need***

The Belgian, Netherlands, Austrian and Swedish delegations, supported by the Luxembourg delegation expressed their concerns about the problem of micro-plastics in the environment and the need to find adequate solutions to it ([16263/14](#)).

They urged the Commission and member states to address in particular the scientific gaps and match them with the information available from different sources. In this respect the role and contribution of the European Environment Agency and the European Chemicals Agency should be assessed and defined. In addition, they called for a ban on micro-plastics in cosmetics and detergents in order to strengthen the EU's role as a frontrunner for innovative products and green growth whilst providing a level playing field for industry.

– ***Outbreak of Legionnaires' disease in Portugal***

The Portuguese delegation briefed the Council about the outbreak of Legionnaires' disease that occurred in Portugal last November, which highlighted the need to update and revise legislation on industrial cooling systems ([16521/14](#)).

– ***Work programme of the incoming Latvian presidency***

The incoming Latvian presidency presented its environment work programme for the first half of 2015.

The Latvian presidency intends to discuss the review of the 2020 strategy and the 2015 Annual Growth Survey at the Environment Council in March 2015.

It will in particular continue the work on two legislative proposals: the draft directive on medium combustion plants and the draft decision on the market stability reserve, in order to reach an agreement with the European Parliament.

In terms of international issues, the presidency will work on climate, the post-2015 agenda and international chemicals and waste conventions.

– *Waste package*

The presidency briefed the Council on the state of play of the legislative proposal amending six directives addressing the management of different types of waste ([17012/14](#)). This proposal was presented last July as part of the Circular Economy Package, seeking to improve waste management in the European Union, with a view to protecting the quality of the environment and ensuring prudent and rational use of natural resources.

Ministers expressed serious concerns about the Commission's intention to withdraw this proposal and to replace it with a more ambitious one, as it was announced on 16 December during the presentation of the Commission work programme for 2015, while reiterating the importance of ensuring the transition to a circular economy. The Council expressed its willingness to continue working on the basis of the current proposal and asked the Commission to clarify its intentions on the next steps concerning the Circular Economy Package. The Commission said that it had taken good note of all views expressed by ministers. It reassured the Council that work already done will be taken into account in its new and more ambitious proposal to promote a circular economy, which will be presented in 2015.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**FOREIGN AFFAIRS****Euro-Mediterranean Agreement - Tunisia**

The Council approved, on behalf of the EU, a protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement between the EU and Tunisia on the general principles for the participation of Tunisia in Union programmes. It also endorsed the signature, provisional application and conclusion of this protocol.

Euro-Mediterranean Agreement - Algeria

The Council approved, on behalf of the EU, a protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement between the EU and Algeria on the general principles for the participation of Algeria in Union programmes. It also endorsed the signature, provisional application and conclusion of this protocol.

Euro-Mediterranean Agreement - Lebanon

The Council approved, on behalf of the EU, a protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement between the EU and Lebanon on the general principles for the participation of Lebanon in Union programmes. It also endorsed the signature, provisional application and conclusion of this protocol.

Euro-Mediterranean Agreement - Morocco

The Council approved, on behalf of the EU, the signature, provisional application and conclusion of a protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement between the EU and Morocco, to take account of the accession of Croatia to the EU.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**Single supervisory mechanism: ECB sanctions**

The Council agreed to a draft regulation proposed by the European Central Bank adjusting the powers of the latter to impose sanctions in the light of its new tasks as the single supervisor for euro area banks.

The ECB's recommendation for a Council regulation adapts the framework already set out in regulation 2532/98 for the purposes of monetary policy in order to establish a regime for the imposition of sanctions by the ECB relating to the performance of its supervisory tasks under the single supervisory mechanism (regulation 1024/2013).

The regulation will be adopted once finalised in all languages.

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Dock dues on products from French outermost regions

The Council adopted a decision authorising France until 31 December 2020 to apply exemptions or reductions to dock dues for certain products produced in the outermost regions of Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique, Réunion and Mayotte ([15406/14](#)). The decision will apply from 1 July 2015. The application of the current rules comprised in decision 2004/165/EC is extended by six months until 30 June 2015.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Dangerous substances - terrorism

The Council adopted conclusions on preventing and combating the use of dangerous substances and methods to carry out acts of terrorism ([16326/14](#)).

Glossary of Firearms Terminology

The Council adopted conclusions on the Glossary of Firearms Terminology in law enforcement cooperation ([15631/14](#)).

Final report 6th round of mutual evaluations

The Council endorsed the recommendations of the final report on the 6th round of mutual evaluations on "The practical implementation and operation of the Council Decision 2002/187/JHA of 28 February 2002 setting up Eurojust with a view to reinforcing the fight against serious crime and of the Council Decision 2008/976/JHA on the European Judicial Network in criminal matters" ([14536/2/14 REV 2](#)).

The rounds of mutual evaluation are a mechanism for evaluating the application and implementation at national level of international undertakings in the fight against organised crime.

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

EUPOL Afghanistan

The Council extended the mandate of the EU police mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan) until 31 December 2016. At the same time, it allocated a budget of €58.5 million for the period from 1 January 2015 until the end of 2016. For more details, see press release.

European Defence Agency - Budget 2015

The Council approved the budget of the European Defence Agency for 2015. It amounts to €30.5 million.

TRADE

Trade relations with Kenya

The Council did not raise any objection to a Commission delegated act proposing to add Kenya to the list of countries benefitting from the so-called market access regulation, a temporary unilateral scheme before the conclusion and application of the revised Economic Partnership Agreements.

CUSTOMS UNION

Electronic customs

The Council adopted conclusions endorsing the Venice Declaration of 15 October 2014 on electronic customs and single window implementation in the EU, and calling on the member states and the Commission to implement it.

They also call on to agree, by 2015, on an action plan and a roadmap to implement a single window environment for customs.

Moreover, the conclusions invite the Commission to present a proposal in view of the revision of the e-Customs decision.

The text of the conclusions is set out in document *16507/14*.

See also [*electronic_customs_initiative*](#).

INTERNAL MARKET

eCall: emergency call system in road accidents

The Council reached a political agreement on type-approval requirements for fitting eCall devices in new motor vehicles. The EU-wide eCall system is designed to speed up emergency services in road accidents ([16345/14](#)).

The agreement, which follows a provisional deal reached between the Council and European Parliament representatives on 1 December 2014, seeks to reduce the number of injuries and fatalities in road accidents in the Union.

As from 31 March 2018, new vehicles will have to be fitted with wireless devices to trigger a distress signal to the 112 emergency call number.

For more information see press release: [eCall: emergency call system in road accidents](#).

Gas appliances

The Council agreed on a general approach for updating safety requirements of appliances burning gaseous fuels ([16789/1/14](#)).

The general approach allows negotiations to be launched with the European Parliament with a view to adopting the new regulation.

The objective of this regulation is to ensure that gas appliances and their fittings fulfil harmonised requirements providing for a high level of protection of the health and safety of persons, domestic animals and property and for a rational use of energy.

Typical gas appliances include boilers, gas cookers/ovens/barbecues and patio heaters.

The new regulation will update the current rules under the Gas Appliances Directive (2009/142/EC). They apply to appliances to be placed on the EU market and/or put into service for the first time.

The new rules are also intended to improve market surveillance by public authorities without imposing unnecessary burdens and costs on industry.

APPOINTMENTS

European Economic and Social Committee

The Council appointed Mr Gerhard HANDKE (Germany) as a member of the European Economic and Social Committee for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 20 September 2015 ([13883/14](#)).
