



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



7522/10 (Presse 67)

PRESS RELEASE

3002nd Council meeting

Environment

Brussels, 15 March 2010

President

Elena ESPINOSA MANGANA

Minister for the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B - 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 9442 / 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom>

7522/10 (Presse 67)

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Main results of the Council

*The Council set a new **EU target for the protection of biodiversity in 2020**: The EU intends to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, restore them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss. The Council conclusions outline at the same time the **EU vision for protecting species in the EU by 2050**.*

*In its conclusions on **climate change**, the Council evaluated the outcomes of the Copenhagen climate conference and stressed the opportunities for immediate implementation offered by the Copenhagen Accord. It requested the Commission to present a **study of the comparability** of greenhouse gas emission reductions offered by third countries as well as an **impact assessment** of the EU's conditional move to a 30% emissions cut.*

*The Council debated for the first time the proposed regulation setting **CO₂ emissions standards for light vans** so as to guide further work on this file.*

*Without discussion, the Council adopted its first-reading position on a draft regulation concerning **novel foods**.*

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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.

PARTICIPANTS

The governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Ms Joke SCHAUVLIEGE

Minister for Environment, Nature and Culture

Bulgaria:

Ms Nona KARADJOVA

Minister for the Environment and Water

Czech Republic:

Mr Jan DUSÍK

Minister for the Environment

Denmark:

Ms Lykke FRIIS

Minister for Climate and Energy

Ms Karen ELLEMANN

Minister for the Environment

Germany:

Ms Katherina REICHE

Parliamentary State Secretary

Estonia:

Mr Jaanus TAMKIVI

Minister for the Environment

Ireland:

Mr John GORMLEY

Minister of Environment

Greece:

Mr Thanos MORAITIS

Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change

Spain:

Ms Elena ESPINOSA

Minister for the Environment and the Rural and Marine Environment

Ms Teresa RIBERA RODRÍGUEZ

State Secretary for Climate Change

Mr Francesc BALTASAR

Counsellor of Environment and Housing, Generalitat de Catalunya

France:

Mr Jean-Louis BORLOO

Minister for Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Marine Affairs, responsible for green technologies and climate negotiations

Italy:

Ms Stefania PRESTIGIACOMO

Minister for the Environment

Cyprus:

Mr Demetris ELIADES

Minister of Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment

Latvia:

Mr Raimonds VĒJONIS

Minister for the Environment

Lithuania:

Mr Gediminas KAZLAUSKAS

Minister for the Environment

Luxembourg:

Mr Claude WISELER

Minister for the Civil Service and Administrative Reform, Minister for Public Works

Hungary:

Mr István KLING

State Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Water

Malta:

Mr George PULLICINO

Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs

Netherlands:

Ms Tineke HUIZINGA-HERINGA

Minister for Transport, Public Works and Water Management

Austria:

Mr Nikolaus BERLAKOVICH

Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment
and Water Management**Poland:**

Mr Andrzej KRASZEWSKI

Minister for Environment

Portugal:

Ms Dulce PÁSSARO

Minister for the Environment

Romania:

Mr Laszlo BORBELY

Minister for the Environment and Forests

Slovenia:

Mr Roko ŽARNIČ

Minister for the Environment

Slovakia:

Mr Jaroslav JADUŠ

State Secretary, Ministry of the Environment

Finland:

Ms Paula LEHTOMÄKI

Minister for the Environment

Sweden:

Mr Andreas CARLGREN

Minister for the Environment

United Kingdom:

Mr Hilary BENN

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs

Ms Roseanna CUNNINGHAM

Minister for Environment of Scotland

Commission:

Mr Janez POTOČNIK

Member

Ms Connie HEDEGAARD

Member

ITEMS DEBATED

SOIL PROTECTION

The presidency briefed the Council on progress concerning the draft directive establishing a framework for the protection of soil, as set out in its report ([7100/10](#)).

The European Parliament delivered its opinion at first reading in November 2007 ([14979/07](#)); the Council has not yet reached political agreement on this dossier. Several delegations regretted this fact and expressed the need for an EU-level instrument so as to fill a gap in EU environmental legislation and put soil on par with water or air in terms of protection. Others reiterated their opposition to the proposal as well as their concerns in relation to subsidiarity, the administrative burden and cost-effectiveness. A number of ministers called for a fresh approach in order to take discussions at European level on soil protection forward.

To date, soil has not been subject to a specific protection policy at EU level. The draft directive would establish a common strategy for the protection of soil, based on the principles of

- integration of soil concerns into other sectoral policies,
- prevention of threats to soil and mitigation of their effects,
- preservation of soil functions through the identification of priority areas and establishment of actions programmes,
- identification and remediation of contaminated sites,
- awareness raising, reporting and exchange of information.

BIODIVERSITY - Council conclusions

The Council adopted conclusions that set out the EU headline target on halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems services, and restoring them in so far as feasible by 2020, and its vision for the better protection of biodiversity in the EU by 2050. They also outline the EU's stance concerning biodiversity protection at global level and the further develop the EU position on the future international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit sharing. In addition, the conclusions call for reinforced mainstreaming of biodiversity objectives in cross-cutting EU policies and strategies.

The text can be found in document [7536/10](#).

STRATEGY FOR JOBS AND GROWTH

The Council exchanged views on the environmental aspects of the proposed new "Europe 2020" strategy for growth and jobs ([7110/10](#)). The Commission suggests smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as its priorities.

The president summarised the debate as follows:

It was with great interest that delegations took note of the Commission's proposal for a new EU strategy for growth and jobs, in particular of the fact that sustainability is one of its priorities and that the existing climate objectives are among its headline targets. Several delegations called for the strengthening of the environmental dimension of the proposed strategy.

Many highlighted the opportunities for employment and balanced and sustainable growth that result from policies to protect the environment, be it on climate change, biodiversity protection, efficient use of natural resources or other issues.

Ministers argued that environmental policy is part of the solution to tackle the current crisis. Resource efficiency and sustainable consumption are key to achieving not only the EU's climate targets, but also for energy security and competitiveness.

Integrating environmental concerns into other sectoral policies was considered the best way to achieve the targets in a cost-effective way. Market instruments were regarded as a tool with great potential to reinforce co-benefits between economic and environmental policies. The importance of ensuring complementarity with the EU's sustainable development strategy, as well as with the financial instruments for cohesion and regional policy, was stressed too.

According to delegations, the governance of the future strategy should take full account of the contribution of environment policy to creating a green and innovative economy. Ministers were unanimous that the Environment Council needs to be continuously involved in developing and implementing the "Europe 2020" strategy.

The Council's views, together with those of other Council configurations, will contribute to the discussion of the new strategy in the European Council on 25/26 March.

CLIMATE CHANGE: Follow-up to the Copenhagen climate conference - Council conclusions

The Council adopted conclusions on the follow-up to the Copenhagen climate conference (7 - 19 December 2009), set out in document [7562/10](#). They evaluate the outcomes of the conference, stress the opportunities for immediate implementation offered by the Copenhagen Accord and confirm existing EU positions on a broad range of issues.

Furthermore, they request the Commission to present an assessment of the comparability and adequacy of greenhouse gas emission reductions offered by third countries as well as an impact assessment of the EU's conditional move to a 30% emissions cut.

Over lunch, environment ministers discussed key elements of the negotiations for a new international climate agreement. In addition, they were briefed about preparations for the 16th conference of the parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (29 November to 10 December in Cancún, Mexico) by the Mexican secretary of the environment Juan Rafael Elvira Quesada.

CO₂ EMISSIONS OF LIGHT VANS

The Council discussed the proposed regulation setting CO₂ emission standards for light commercial vehicles. Proposed last November, the draft regulation ([15317/09](#)) complements the regulation on CO₂ emission limits for new passenger cars ([443/2009](#)).

The proposal would provide for a limit for the average CO₂ emissions from new light commercial vehicles at 175g CO₂/km, phased in from 2014 to 2016. The text would also set a long-term target of 135g CO₂/km for 2020 and oblige manufacturers to pay penalties if their fleet fails to meet the objective.

Ministers were asked to comment on the following questions:

- *Do you agree with the proposed long-term target of 135g CO₂/km to be met in 2020 and subject to a review that will confirm its viability?*

There was broad support for a long-term target subject to confirmation of its viability through an impact assessment since this would give planning certainty and competitive advantages to industry as well as ensure lower emissions. A group of delegations highlighted in addition its importance for reducing carbon dioxide emissions in sectors not covered by the EU emissions trading scheme and insisted on the ambition of the draft law. Some delegations asked to include minibuses and heavier vans in its scope. Others argued that an objective of 135g CO₂/km was difficult to achieve by 2020 and asked for more time, given the length of investment cycles in the automotive sector.

- *Do you consider that the flexibility mechanisms included in this proposal are appropriate to ensure the balance between the need to reduce CO₂ emissions and the feasibility of the objectives of this legislation?*

Several ministers asked for the phase-in of the target between 2014 and 2016 to be eliminated so as to cut emissions faster. Others requested that its introduction be extended until 2017 in order to take account of the industry's product development cycles. The derogation for low-volume manufacturers was in principle supported.

- *Is the level of penalties of this proposal adequate to ensure the dissuasive objective of this regulation, maintaining the necessary level of ambition?*

Some participants objected to the structure of the penalties, considering it too complicated and not sufficiently dissuasive. Another group of ministers felt that penalties were too high and should be aligned with the parallel legislation on carbon dioxide emissions from passenger cars.

Written contributions from delegations can be found in [7317/10](#) + [7317/10](#) ADD1. The views expressed by ministers will guide further work on this file within the Council.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ship recycling

The Commission presented its report on the assessment of the link between the Hong Kong convention, the Basel convention and the EU regulation on shipments of waste ([7501/10](#)).

Water strategy for the Mediterranean

The presidency briefed the Council on the strategy for water in the Mediterranean which is to be annexed to the declaration of the fourth Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference on water on 13 April 2010 in Barcelona ([7300/10](#)).

Conferences

- Biodiversity after 2010

The presidency briefed the Council on a pan-European ministerial conference held in Madrid on 26-27 January 2010, which assessed a post-2010 target and vision for the protection of biodiversity ([7259/10](#)).

- Water scarcity and drought

The Council was briefed by the presidency on an international conference on water scarcity and drought. It had been held in Madrid on 18-19 February 2010 and had discussed the impact of climate change on water supply ([7304/10](#)).

- Bio-waste recycling in Europe

The presidency presented a note on a conference on bio-waste recycling, which had taken place in Barcelona on the 15 February 2010. At the conference, the Commission had presented its impact assessment on bio-waste management and several studies on bio-waste treatment in various European countries ([7307/10](#)).

Review of the strategy on mercury

Sweden drew the attention of the Council to the review of the EU strategy concerning mercury. It stressed that the EU ought to continue to show global leadership and remain at the forefront of reducing and eliminating mercury use and emissions, especially dental amalgam ([7326/10](#)). At the same time, the Commission provided information on progress concerning the review of the said strategy, which is to be completed this year ([7436/10](#)).

Implementation of EURO V/VI

The Dutch delegation asked the Commission to include the use of a portable measurement system in its proposal for the Euro VI comitology decision in order to reduce differences between actual NO_x emissions in urban driving conditions and those measured in type approval. The Netherlands invited other member states to support its initiative ([7223/10](#)).

Drinking water directive

The German delegation highlighted the upcoming revision of the drinking water directive. Germany shared its concerns that the current legislation does not cover all products in contact with drinking water and called on the Commission to address the issue of 'safe materials' during the review ([7391/10](#)).

Black Sea environmental partnership

Romania presented the state of play on the Black Sea environmental partnership, to be launched on 16 March 2010. It is aimed at creating a framework for regional cooperation on environment policy in the Black Sea area ([7211/10](#)).

Water framework directive

The Danish delegation provided information on the implementation of the water framework directive in Denmark ([7496/10](#)).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**ENVIRONMENT****Convention on transboundary air pollution***

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to participate in the negotiations on the revision of the protocol to the 1979 convention on long-range transboundary air pollution to abate acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone (Gothenburg Protocol).

AGRICULTURE**New rules for novel foods**

The Council adopted its first-reading position on a draft regulation concerning novel foods ([11261/2/09](#)).

For further details, see press release [7521/10](#).

EXTERNAL RELATIONS**Central American countries - Negotiations for an association agreement**

The Council approved a Commission recommendation to authorise amendments to the negotiating directives for an association agreement between the EU and the Central American republics of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, with a view to allowing Panama to be included in the negotiations.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS**European Police College - Work programme 2010**

The Council approved the European Police College work programme for 2010 ([5785/10](#)).

FISHERIES**Agreement with Norway and Faroe Islands – Allowable catches and quotas for 2010**

The Council amended regulation 53/2010 regarding the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks, following the conclusion of bilateral arrangements for 2010 with Norway and the Faroe Islands ([6095/1/10](#) and [6065/1/10 ADD1](#)).

The new regulation updates the total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas for fish stocks applicable to EU vessels and in EU waters for 2010 following the arrangements concluded in January with Norway and the Faroe Islands.

The fishing opportunities for EU vessels in the waters of Norway and the Faroe Islands and in EU waters for stocks shared and jointly managed with those countries, as well as the fishing opportunities in EU waters for vessels flying the flag of Norway and the Faroe Islands, are established each year according to the agreements on fisheries with those countries¹.

The volumes (in tonnes) of fishing possibilities with Norway for 2010 are as follows:

Species	TACs 2009	TACs 2010	Norway	EU
Cod	28 798	33 552	5 704	27 848
Haddock	42 110	35 794	8 073	27 711
Saithe	125 934	107 044	56 613	50 431
Whiting	15 173	12 897	790	12 107
Plaice	55 500	63 825	4 268	59 557
Mackerel	63 826	60 446	39 054	21 392
Herring	171 000	164 300	47 647	116 653

¹ OJ L 226, 29.8.1980, p. 48 (Norway); OJ L 226, 29.8.1980, p. 12 (Faroe Islands).

The volumes (in tonnes) of fishing possibilities with Faroe Islands for 2010 are as follows:

EU fleet fishing in Faorese waters		
Species	TACs 2009	TACs 2010
Blue ling and ling	3 065	2 700
Blue whiting	3 000	2 700
Mackerel	3 982	3 765

Faroe Islands fishing in EU or Greenland waters		
Species	TACs 2009	TACs 2010
Ling and tusk	250	200
Blue ling	200	150
Blue whiting	10 500	9 000
Horse mackerel	5 000	2 000
Herring IIIa	500	450
Redfish (Greenland waters)	200	385
Mackerel	4 798	4 536