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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: International Conference on the Role of Women in Mountain Regions
(Alpbach, Tyrol, 18–19 April 2017)
- Information from the Austrian delegation

Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Austrian delegation on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 19 June 2017.

**International Conference on the Role of Women in Mountain Regions
(Alpbach, Tyrol, 18–19 April 2017)**

- Information from the Austrian delegation -

The international Conference 'The role of women in mountain regions' took place in the context of the current Austrian Presidency of the Alpine Convention, to which the EU is also a Party, and served as a platform for networking and exchanging experience on best practice from initiatives all over the world.

The Conference's goal was to highlight the unique role of women when it comes to the protection, conservation and sustainable development of mountain regions.

The Conference gave important impetus for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goals No 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and 15 (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss).

More than 160 participants took part in the two-day event, including the Austrian Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, the Environment and Water Management, the Secretary General of the Alpine Convention and several representatives of the UN. The Conference was conducted in the light of the three pillars of sustainability (ecology, economy and cultural and social affairs).

Mountain regions are increasingly caught between the global challenges of climate change, loss of biodiversity, the scarcity of land, water availability, cultivation and farming, and securing employment. Against this background, the role of women in mountain regions is of special importance as it is usually women who are particularly aware of the changes occurring in their environment and engage with initiatives to confront these changes.

In order to strengthen the role of women in mountain regions, necessary steps have been identified in a declaration titled 'Regional solutions for global challenges':

- Women all over the world in mountain regions have manifold and often very different tasks and roles. Therefore, a platform should be created for a permanent exchange of information and experiences.
- Measures have to be taken at the regional, national and global level to improve women's access to the labour market and their representation in the relevant forums, and to prevent the depopulation of mountain areas.
- Awareness raising initiatives should be promoted at global level. To reduce inequalities, regional policy for women should not only be understood as regional economic policy but, with a view to sustainability, should include social and environmental aspects as well.
- At universities, schools and other educational institutions, knowledge should increasingly be disseminated about the manifold roles of women in mountain areas, and relevant research should be conducted. To achieve this, financial support should be provided.
- Women and girls should derive greater benefit from the results of this research and knowledge, to be able to increase their prospects and their scope for action.
- International organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and UN Environment should engage in targeted cooperation efforts to make it easier for women in mountain regions to combine their different roles (family, work, and their role as vehicles of culture) without compromising their quality of life.
- When supporting projects in mountain regions consideration should be given to strengthening the role of women.
- Establishments should be financed that help women with their family and caring responsibilities; at the same time, there should be support for men to get involved. This would give women more freedom to take up other roles in mountain areas.
- The Alpine Convention intends to actively pursue these aims.