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From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 12 May 2014
To: Delegations

Subject: Council conclusions on Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region

Delegations will find attached Council conclusions on Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region as adopted by the Council (Foreign Affairs) on 12 May 2014.

**Council conclusions on Developing a European Union Policy
towards the Arctic Region**

1. The Council welcomes the Joint Communication of the Commission and the High Representative of June 2012 on Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region, which sets out the path for the EU's increased engagement in the Arctic. The Council also takes note of the important considerations of the European Parliament in its resolution of 12 March 2014 on the EU strategy for the Arctic. The Arctic is a region of growing strategic importance and the Council agrees that the EU should now further enhance its contribution to Arctic cooperation. Rapid climate change, a major concern and cause of fundamental changes in the Arctic, combined with increased prospects for economic development in the Arctic region call for the EU to engage actively with Arctic partners to assist in addressing the challenge of sustainable development in a prudent and responsible manner.

2. Recalling the Conclusions of 8 December 2009, the Council welcomes the significant range of activities the EU is already undertaking in the region across the EU policy spectrum, in particular a valuable contribution to Arctic cooperation through research (€20 million/year, 2007-13), regional and cross-border investment (€1.14 billion, 2007-13) and cooperation with our partners in the fields of environment, transport, energy, and maritime safety. The Council supports the view that the EU action should now be strengthened by: supporting research and channelling knowledge to address the challenges of environmental and climate changes in the Arctic; acting with responsibility to contribute to ensuring economic development in the Arctic based on sustainable use of resources and environmental expertise; intensifying the EU's constructive engagement with Arctic States, indigenous peoples and other partners to find common solutions to challenges that require an international response. The EU should seek to strengthen its support for the the protection of the Arctic environment through its policies regarding for example climate change, air pollutants including black carbon, biodiversity and fisheries.

3. The Council confirms that the EU should enhance its contribution to Arctic cooperation, in conformity with international instruments, notably the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
4. The Council supports the intention of the Commission and the High Representative to intensify dialogue on Arctic matters with all the EU's Arctic partners.
5. The Council recognises the Arctic Council as the primary body for circumpolar regional cooperation. The Council re-affirms its agreement to and its strong support for the observer status of the EU in the Arctic Council, and notes that the EU is committed to work actively as an observer of the Arctic Council and contribute to its activities. The Council urges Canada to use the current positive momentum in EU-Canada relations to help resolve the remaining issue so as to allow for the full implementation of the Kiruna decision regarding the EU's observer status as soon as possible before the next EU/Canada summit. The Council agrees that this would facilitate an even more effective EU contribution to Arctic cooperation. The Council also stresses the important role played by EU Member States in the Arctic Council as members and observers in promoting cooperation in the Arctic in accordance with their respective status.
6. The Council recognises the efforts of the Arctic states to develop joint approaches and best practice to address the potential environmental impact and safety concerns related to increasing activities in the region. In this context, the collaboration of the EU and its agencies with Arctic Council bodies in addressing common Arctic challenges should be strengthened.
7. The Council supports EU's efforts for increased dialogue with indigenous peoples of the Arctic region, and welcomes the annual EU Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue meetings. The EU should also explore appropriate ways of ensuring that the representatives of Arctic indigenous peoples are informed and consulted on EU policies that may affect them.

8. A better understanding of the developments underway in the Arctic is vital to ensure a sustainable future for the region and its peoples. The Council therefore supports an enhanced contribution by the EU to Arctic research, including monitoring and observation efforts, and to the sharing and dissemination of information about the Arctic. The Council looks forward to the results of the preparatory action to conduct a Strategic Assessment of development in the Arctic co-ordinated by the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland with a network of European research institutions of Arctic expertise. The Council requests the Commission to consider the options proposed by this project to establish an EU Arctic Information Centre to promote efficient access to Arctic information, to facilitate dialogues and to communicate on Arctic issues. The Council stresses the importance of the alignment of Arctic research programmes in the EU in dialogue with other partners active in Arctic research. The Galway statement on Atlantic and Arctic Ocean research cooperation between the EU, the United States and Canada of 24 May 2013 is a further step in this direction.
9. The Council encourages the Commission and Member States to continue their efforts aiming at the swift agreement within the International Maritime Organisation on a mandatory "Polar Code". Such a code would set out a range of measures and requirements to improve and strengthen maritime cooperation and safety and prevent pollution, including as regards cruise passenger ships. The Council takes note of the Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic and Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution, Preparedness and Response in the Arctic agreements signed by the Member States of the Arctic Council. The Council also invites the Member States and the Commission, with the technical and scientific assistance of the European Maritime Safety Agency, to support the work of the Arctic Council on emergency preparedness, prevention and response measures, as well as on following up on the recommendations on maritime safety from the 2009 Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment.
10. With respect to the gradual opening, in the years to come, of trans-oceanic Arctic routes for shipping and navigation, the Council reiterates, the importance of respecting international law principles, including the freedom of navigation and the right of innocent passage.

11. The Council notes the resource policy developments in the Arctic states including in the Barents Region. The EU should pursue long-term partnerships and policy dialogues contributing to securing access to, and promoting safe and sustainable management of raw materials and renewable natural resources.
12. The Council confirms its support for the further development of the Northern Dimension partnerships' work in the European Arctic, in particular as regards environmental activities as well as the development of the transport connections in the region, including new maritime routes. The Council values the practical work of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in this regard.
13. The Council supports strengthening the partnership between the European Union on the one hand, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark on the other which aims at promoting the sustainable development of Greenland and the diversification of the economy. The partnership also encourages an enhanced dialogue and cooperation on global and Arctic issues.
14. The Council invites the Commission to ensure that Arctic-relevant programmes financed by the EU under the 2014-2020 multi-annual financial framework, meet the development needs of local populations and offer better opportunities for circumpolar cooperation and research as well as Arctic economic development.
15. The Council requests the Commission and the High Representative to keep it regularly informed on the progress in implementing the Communication of June 2012. The Council furthermore requests the Commission and the High Representative to present proposals for the further development of an integrated and coherent Arctic Policy by December 2015. As part of this exercise, the Council encourages the Commission to ensure effective synergies between the various EU funding instruments in the Arctic region.