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**"A" ITEM NOTE**

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
No. prev. doc.:	12765/14 ASILE 21 COHOM 125
Subject:	Position on the arrangements for additional participatory rights for the European Union within the formal and informal bodies of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

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Delegations will find attached the text of the above-mentioned position, as agreed by the Permanent Representatives Committee at its meeting on 10 September 2014.

The Committee invites the Council to:

- confirm its agreement on this position, as set out in the Annex I to this Note;
- inscribe the attached statement (Annex II) in its minutes.

**Position on the arrangements for additional participatory rights for the European Union within the formal and informal bodies of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

1. The European Union has been for many years a key actor in the UNHCR, as a major donor in the field of humanitarian aid and development assistance, through its activities on international protection including resettlement and by supporting robust asylum systems through the establishment of the Common European Asylum System. This role has continuously increased over the last years. This calls for an improvement of the European Union's current status vis-à-vis the UNHCR.
2. The Council considers that new arrangements should be sought, whereby the European Union would be granted additional participatory rights, in particular the right to participate in private meetings held to discuss key policy and governance issues. This would allow the European Union, in its areas of competence, to follow the UNHCR's agenda more closely and effectively, thereby improving the coherence between the European Union's political, operational and funding priorities in the area of international protection, on the one hand, and UNHCR's political and operational priorities, on the other hand.

Moreover, additional participatory rights for the European Union in the Executive Committee and its subsidiary committees would facilitate better targeted and coordinated assistance to host countries of persons in need of international protection and IDPs and more effective partnerships with other donors.

3. In order to achieve this objective, the Council invites the Commission, in close coordination with the High Representative, to approach the UNHCR in view of the meeting of the UNHCR's Executive Committee next October. The Commission is invited to regularly report to Coreper and before the end of September on the result of those contacts. Member States, as members or observers of UNHCR's Executive Committee, are invited to support this initiative.
  4. The Council may further develop this position in the light of the discussions to come.
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**United Kingdom statement for the minutes of the Competitiveness Council of 25 September 2014**

"The United Kingdom is pleased to indicate its support for the "A" point on arrangements for additional participatory rights for the European Union within the formal and informal bodies of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The United Kingdom reiterates its understanding that the Coreper of 10 September adopted this text in order to allow the Commission and EEAS to conduct initial discussions with the UNHCR on possible options to achieve such additional rights, but that this did not constitute a formal mandate to negotiate any changes. The text requires the Commission and EEAS to report to Coreper on these initial contacts by the end of September. Coreper will want to return to this question in the light of the reports made."

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