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From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

Subject: Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 18/2014 on EuropeAid's evaluation and results oriented monitoring systems

At its meeting on 26 May 2015, the Council adopted the Council conclusions as set out in the annex to this note.

**Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 18/2014 on
EuropeAid's evaluation and results-oriented monitoring systems**

1. The Council welcomes the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 18/2014 on EuropeAid's evaluation and results-oriented monitoring (ROM) systems.
2. The Council stresses that sound monitoring and evaluation systems are vital to ensure impact and effectiveness of development assistance. The Council recalls its Conclusions on the Agenda for Change,¹ stressing the need for EU development cooperation to deliver robust results and impact on the ground and to achieve greater effectiveness and better accountability for public spending. The Council also recalls its Conclusions on the 2014 Annual report on the EU's development and external assistance policies and their implementation,² which firmly reiterate the need to further improve reporting on the outcomes and impact of EU development assistance, for all aid modalities, and to better link objectives and results.
3. The Council, moreover, recalls its Conclusions on a transformative post-2015 agenda,³ reaffirming that the agenda should be guided by the principle of accountability, the fundamental requirements of which are ownership, transparency and effective and efficient monitoring and review of progress.
4. The Council notes that the Court, in its Special Report, concludes that EuropeAid's evaluation and ROM systems are not sufficiently reliable. The Council acknowledges that the report concludes that, overall, the evaluation and ROM functions are well organised. At the same time, the Council also takes note that the report states that there is a lack of overall supervision of programme evaluation activities, and insufficient attention paid to the efficient use of evaluation and ROM resources.

¹ Doc. 9369/12
² Doc. 16858/14
³ Doc. 16827/14

5. The Council takes note of the recommendations of the Court according to which EuropeAid should:

- Maintain adequate information management systems and perform needs assessments to ensure an informed allocation of financial and human resources for programme evaluations and ROM systems;
- Ensure appropriate prioritisation of programme evaluations by defining clear selection criteria for evaluations, strengthening the system to monitor and report on the implementation of these evaluation plans, as well as strengthening the overall supervision of programme evaluation activities;
- Improve the quality of programme evaluation and ROM, by ensuring that quality control requirements are applied by the Commission's operational services and EU Delegations, and checking on a regular basis the application of these controls;
- Enhance the evaluation system's capability to provide adequate information on results achieved, by applying more rigorously the regulatory provisions on the use of SMART objectives and verifiable indicators, by modifying the monitoring system so that it continues to provide data on programmes until at least three years after their completion, and by increasing significantly the proportion of ex post evaluations;
- Ensure maximum use of evaluation and ROM findings, by extending the follow-up period for strategic evaluations, and developing a central database for programme evaluations to store evaluation reports, action plans and their follow-up.

6. The Council requests that the Commission reports to the Council on the measures taken to implement the Court's recommendations within the framework of its Annual Activity Report. The Council takes note of and acknowledges the measures taken so far by the Commission to improve EuropeAid's capacity to monitor, report and evaluate policy achievements. The Council calls the Commission to ensure that these activities and the sequence of project, programme and strategic evaluations are adequately supervised and resourced.
7. The Council looks forward to the establishment of programme evaluation plans on the basis of clear guidance and selection criteria. The Council welcomes the advancement of the information management system for evaluations, providing a more solid basis for improving the overall planning, quality control and follow-up of programme evaluations. The Council underlines the importance of having a proper knowledge management policy to ensure that lessons learned from evaluations are systematically followed up and taken into account for future policy and funding decisions.
8. The Council underlines the importance of well-functioning monitoring and evaluation systems in order to achieve and demonstrate results as well as for learning from experience. The Council looks forward to the timely implementation of the evaluation policy for EU development cooperation as well as the new EU International Cooperation and Development Results Framework⁴ recently launched by the Commission that will allow the Commission to better measure and communicate the overall performance of its portfolio, providing public accountability and ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently. In this context, the Council stresses the importance of a coherent and coordinated approach across different frameworks and initiatives.

⁴ Doc. 7604/15

9. With respect to the Court's observations on the evaluation methodology of budget support, the Council acknowledges the inherent complexity of evaluating budget support, but also considers that a clear evidence base in this area is essential and that the methodology developed with the OECD/DAC is robust and has demonstrated strong results. The Council welcomes the leading role played by the Commission in the process aimed at continuously reviewing and improving this methodology, as well as addressing practical implementation challenges in the field.

10. The Council commends the efforts of the EU and its Member States in working together to improve the evaluation function and encourages further initiatives to strengthen the consultative and advisory role of the EU Heads of Evaluation Services group.

11. The Council invites the EU and its Member States to conduct more joint evaluations at country level, with the involvement of partner countries, notably in those countries where Joint Programming creates such opportunities. The Council also invites the Commission to reflect on ways to further enhance monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including strengthening partner countries' statistical systems, and calls on the EU and its Member States to continue working together to share lessons learnt and good practices among themselves and with others, particularly promoting the evaluation function in partner countries, as well as engaging in international efforts to make development cooperation policies more effective and sustainable.
