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THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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Subject: Council conclusions on the EEAS Review

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Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on the EEAS Review, as adopted by the Council on 17 December 2013.

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**COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE EEAS REVIEW**

1. The Council welcomes the work done and the results achieved by the High Representative in setting up the European External Action Service (EEAS), developing it into a modern and operational foreign policy service, equipped to promote EU values and interests as well as to ensure coordination and consistency in the EU's relations with the rest of the world, on the basis of a comprehensive approach, working in cooperation with the diplomatic services of the Member States, the services of the European Commission, and the General Secretariat of the Council.
2. The Council welcomes the High Representative's report on the EEAS Review pursuant to Article 13(3) of Council Decision 2010/427/EU and takes good note of its recommendations. The Council broadly supports the short-term recommendations on the internal aspects of the organization and functioning of the EEAS which can be implemented within the existing institutional and legal framework. The Council strongly welcomes the progress already achieved in the implementation of some short-term recommendations, inter alia on inter-institutional cooperation and staffing issues.
3. The Council recognises the need to further strengthen integrated approaches in CSDP and in crisis management within the EEAS, aiming, notably through ensuring a clear chain of command, at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of CSDP missions and operations, as well as promoting civil-military synergies and closer coordination with other policy departments of the EEAS, while bearing in mind the specificities of the crisis management structures. Work on further streamlining planning and decision making procedures related to CSDP missions and operations should continue, in cooperation with Member States, and be guided by the November 2013 Council conclusions on CSDP and the December 2013 European Council conclusions. .

4. The Council underlines its continuing commitment to the role of EU Special Representatives as a valuable instrument of EU foreign policy and stressed the need to enhance overall efficiency and accountability, as well as to ensure coordination and coherence with all other EU actors, emphasising the importance of close cooperation with the EEAS. In this context, and taking into account the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, a review of the 2007 Guidelines on appointment, mandate, salaries and financing of EUSRs will be pursued, with a view to Council agreement by the end of March 2014.
5. The Council underlines the importance of timely, effective and efficient preparation of Council meetings, based on the work of relevant Council preparatory bodies, streamlined political dialogue meetings and the preparation of comprehensive thematic and regional strategies, while engaging Member States at an early stage to ensure that all internal procedures, including with national parliaments, can be completed.
6. The Council underlines the importance to ensure fully the coordination role of the High Representative as Vice President of the Commission in the field of external relations within the Commission in line with Article 18 (4) of the TEU. The Council calls for continued efforts for effective cooperation amongst all EU actors in the field of external relations and further development of synergies, coherence and pragmatic working arrangements between the EEAS, the Commission services and the General Secretariat of the Council, as well as with the European Parliament where appropriate, with due regard to their different functions in the area of external relations as well as to their respective roles under the Treaties and the Council Rules of Procedure, as well as Council Decision 2010/427/EU. The Council calls for enhanced cooperation between the EEAS and Commission services in external aspects of key EU policies. While recognising the specific mandates and responsibilities of the EU Situation Room and the EU Emergency Response Coordination Centre, the Council supports closer cooperation between the two centres, notably through a Memorandum of Understanding.

7. The Council recognises that the EEAS should be based on a balanced presence of different sources of staff at all levels. The Council emphasises that recruiting national diplomats, based on merit whilst ensuring adequate geographical and gender balance as well as transparency and comprising a meaningful presence of nationals from all the Member States, continues to be a significant goal. Permanent officials and temporary agents coming from the diplomatic services of the Member States should have the same opportunities and obligations and be treated equally. The Council welcomes that the target regarding the minimum (1/3) proportion of EEAS staff at AD level from Member States has been reached. Further efforts are needed to maintain this minimum level in the future, while also ensuring that permanent officials represent at least 60 % of EEAS staff at AD level, and seeking a balance between Headquarters and Delegations.
8. The Council gives its full support to further enhancing cooperation between EU Delegations and Member States diplomatic representations, including non-resident diplomatic missions, with particularly emphasis on sharing reports and information. The Council recognises the priority the EEAS has given to co-location projects, and the potential for the pooling of resources among the EEAS and Member States in diplomatic missions abroad while emphasising that this can only be done on a cost recovery basis. While recognising that consular protection remains a national competence, the Council agrees to further explore, on the basis set out in the Treaties and relevant legal framework, including Council Decision 2010/427/EU, possibilities for developing, in line with Article 5 (10) of the latter, the role of EU Delegations in facilitating and supporting coordination between Member States in their role of providing consular protection to citizens of the Union in third countries, also taking into account lessons learnt from previous crises and the experience of local consular cooperation initiatives. Welcoming the progress already achieved, the Council encourages the EEAS and the Commission services to continue efforts, using existing flexibility, to rationalise and simplify administrative and budgetary tasks in EU delegations, and particularly the administrative burden of Heads of Delegation. Should these rationalization and simplification efforts prove insufficient, the Council remains ready to consider proposals to change the relevant legal texts.

9. The Council invites the High Representative to continue work on the follow-up of the review and to inform the Council regularly about the progress achieved.
  10. The Council takes note of the Medium-Term recommendations and will further examine these during the mandate of the next High Representative in light of the 2014 institutional transition.
  11. The Council invites the next High Representative to assess progress achieved in the context of the EEAS Review and to present by the end of 2015 an evaluation on the organisation and functioning of the EEAS, accompanied, if necessary, by appropriate proposals, including for a revision of Council Decision 2010/427/EU, in accordance with Article 27(3) TEU. In this context, the Council may discuss, as appropriate, the chairmanship of preparatory bodies of the Council on the basis of an assessment of the current arrangements.
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