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## OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
On: 26 October 2015  
To: Delegations

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Subject: Council conclusions on European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 17/2014 "Can the EU's Centres of Excellence initiative contribute effectively to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU?"  
- Council conclusions (26 October 2015)

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Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 17/2014 "Can the EU's Centres of Excellence initiative contribute effectively to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU?", adopted by the Council at its 3420th meeting held on 26 October 2015.

**Council conclusions on European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 17/2014 "Can the EU's Centres of Excellence initiative contribute effectively to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU?"**

1. The Council thanks the Court of Auditors for its Special Report No 17/2014 and takes good note of the conclusions and recommendations therein. The Council notes that the objective of the audit was to assess whether the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence (CoE) Initiative can contribute effectively to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU, in terms of whether it is based on a sound assessment of the situation prior to 2010, whether its organisational set-up is appropriate to meet identified challenge, and whether an appropriate management system is in place and operational.  
The Council welcomes the overall conclusion by the Court that the Initiative can contribute effectively to mitigating CBRN risks from outside the EU, while acknowledging that several elements still need to be finalised. In particular, the Council encourages the Commission to promote the use of Needs Assessments Questionnaires (NAQ) and the development of National CBRN Action Plans (NAP) in all the partner countries participating in the initiative. These NAPs should become the tool for identifying new future projects in the relevant regions. In addition, The Council is aware that CBRN related risks are not confined at borders. Therefore, it is important to maintain the close link between the EU's internal and external CBRN policies.

2. The Council takes good note of the Court's recommendations to the EEAS and the Commission to concentrate EU funding in the areas of most relevance to EU security, to increase the capacities of the regional secretariats by adding technical expertise, and to increase the role of EU delegations. The Council also notes the recommendations by the Court to the Commission to take measures to increase the ownership of the partner countries, to continue efforts to accelerate procedures, and to improve cooperation between decision-making and implementing bodies.
  
3. It encourages the Commission to make best use of Member States' expertise under the Initiative as widely as possible including an early information on the various funding possibilities. An active communication policy on the Initiative remains crucial. As to the allocation of funding, the Council stresses the importance of an appropriate balance between support given to the structures of the Centres of Excellence on the one hand, and programmes and projects on the other hand. Coordination with other relevant international initiatives should be maintained, and where possible strengthened, i.e. with OSCE, IAEA, WHO, OPCW, the 1540 Committee and the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction as well as with other relevant initiatives and programmes implemented in the various regions.
  
4. The Council thanks the EEAS and the Commission for their replies attached to the Special Report No 17/2014, and takes positive note in particular of the actions already taken in regard of the findings of the Court. Notably, the technical assistance to the regional secretariats is well underway.

Use of the established expertise of the CoE network should be taken into consideration in implementing other external assistance programmes e.g. related to the EU's Pre-Accession and Neighbourhood policies as well as planned activities under the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation (INSC). Such an approach will allow the best possible outcome of the work. The same applies to the execution of the EU's development cooperation also as a way to strengthen the nexus between security and development.

5. Finally, the Council would consider it useful to return in due course to the implementation of the recommendations made and to additional aspects and points not covered in the report, and looks forward to the evaluation of the implementation and of the outcome of projects supported by the CBRN CoEs.

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