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Subject: Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No
07/2015 entitled "The EU police mission in Afghanistan: mixed results"
– Council Conclusions (16 November 2015)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report n°07/2015 entitled "The EU police mission in Afghanistan: mixed results", adopted by the Council at its 3426th meeting held on 16 November 2015.

**COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE
EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS' SPECIAL REPORT NO. 07/2015
"THE EU POLICE MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN: MIXED RESULTS"**

1. The Council welcomes the Special Report: "The EU police mission in Afghanistan: mixed results" by the European Court of Auditors published on 8 July 2015. The Court, for the first time auditing solely an EU civilian CSDP mission, assessed whether the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan) had been effective in delivering its mandate, auditing the period from EUPOL Afghanistan's launch in 2007 until end 2014, with a particular focus on its activities after 2012. The constructive participation of the EEAS and European Commission throughout the process is likewise noted and appreciated.
2. The Council shares the Court's recognition that EUPOL Afghanistan was launched and implemented in a uniquely challenging environment for a civilian CSDP mission, gradually improving the implementation of its mandate and gaining recognition from its Afghan counterparts and other international actors for its expertise and contribution to the on-going reform of the civilian policing sector and its linkages with the criminal justice system. The Council notes tangible progress in the Mission's mandate implementation as per its three Lines of Operation (institutional reform of the Ministry of Interior, professionalization of the Afghan National Police and connection to the wider justice system).
3. In this context, the Council welcomes the Court's recommendations relating to the planning, deployment and conduct of EUPOL AFGHANISTAN and of civilian CSDP missions in general. The Council also acknowledges that some observations and recommendations concern issues specifically related to the early phases of EUPOL Afghanistan; several additional recommendations had already been acted upon, most notably relating to the improvement of the Mission's capacity in planning, benchmarking, reporting, progress monitoring and projects management.

4. The Council supports EUPOL Afghanistan's efforts to ensure the sustainability of the Mission's outcomes, with the EEAS and the Mission working closely with relevant EEAS and Commission services, other international actors involved in Afghan Security Sector Reform, as well as Afghan authorities to safeguard and enable other actors to build upon Mission's achievements where required. In this vein, the Council stresses the importance of local ownership whilst recalling the continued EU commitment, in line with the EU Afghanistan Strategy 2014-2016, to assist with the professionalisation of civilian policing, including the support for female police officers, in close coordination with the Afghan authorities and international partners.
5. Concerning the further improvement of the effectiveness of each type of activity of civilian CSDP missions (e.g. training, monitoring/mentoring/advising, projects), the Council notes that a suitable combination of types of activities is to be carefully considered when designing or reviewing a civilian CSDP mission's mandate, taking into account the specific operational environment, the needs of the Host State as well as the mission's end state. The Council notes the importance of a detailed guidance to be given to civilian CSDP missions in order to meet specific operational needs and welcomes ongoing related work.
6. With regards to improving the preparatory work and logistics aspects, the Council also welcomes the Court's recommendations on improving support functions in the planning of future civilian CSDP missions, including the preparation of an overall strategy to mitigate the risks inherent in the downsizing and closure of missions and the disposal of mission assets.
7. The Council takes note of the EEAS' current work to further develop comprehensive guidelines on operational tasks and guidelines in mission support areas, which are partly already in place, making maximum use of lessons learnt from previous missions.
8. In this context, the Council also welcomes the ongoing work by relevant EEAS and Commission services on a Mission Support Platform, aiming at increasing operational and financial efficiency and synergies at both Brussels headquarters and in the field by improving support at central level to key enabling functions, including the rapid deployment of equipment.

9. Regarding human resources and sufficient staffing allowing CSDP missions to operate, the Council supports the efforts of the EEAS, in cooperation with the Commission services, as appropriate and in consultation with the Member States, to explore ways to enable greater flexibility in the recruitment process and ensuring continuity.

10. Looking ahead, the Council encourages the relevant EEAS and Commission services as well as Member States to further enhance successful cooperation and coordination in establishing and conducting civilian CSDP missions. The Council thanks the Court for its valuable work and invites the EEAS and the Commission to implement the Court's recommendations as appropriate.
