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## "I/A" ITEM NOTE

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)/Council
Subject:	Declaration between the European Union and the Kingdom of Bhutan on cooperation on climate change - Approval of signature on behalf of the European Union

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1. The declaration between the European Union and the Kingdom of Bhutan on cooperation on climate change was prepared after the participation of Prime Minister of Bhutan Mr. Tshering Tobgay in the European Development Days in June 2015, and in the context of an on-going project under the EU Global Climate Change Alliance.
2. The aim of the declaration is to acknowledge the ambitious Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) of Bhutan to a new international agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Bhutanese INDC is considered as one of the most ambitious in the world, as it commits the country to permanent carbon neutrality. The country also commits to a permanent forest coverage of at least 60% of its territory. The declaration also asks the European Union and Bhutan to play constructive roles towards reaching an ambitious agreement at the Paris Climate Conference (30 November - 11 December 2015).

3. On 20 November 2015, the Working Party on International Environment Issues (Climate change) and the Working Party Asia-Oceania received information from the European Commission on the EU-Bhutan declaration.
4. In light of the foregoing, the Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to suggest to the Council that it approve the signature, on behalf of the European Union, of the declaration, as set out in Annex.

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**European Union – Kingdom of Bhutan Cooperation on Climate Change**

The European Union and the Kingdom of Bhutan (the 'EU' and 'Bhutan', or collectively 'both sides') enjoy close bilateral relations. This is testified, *inter alia*, by the first ever visit of Bhutan's Prime Minister to the EU's leadership in June 2015, wherein climate change was a core element of the talks. Mindful of their close relations and shared goals, both sides wish to declare the following:

1. The EU and Bhutan recognise their important role in combating global climate change, one of the greatest threats facing humanity.
2. The 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (the 'UNFCCC COP 21'), to be held in December 2015 in Paris, will be a historic milestone for enhancing collective action and accelerating global transformation to a low-carbon and climate-resilient society.
3. Both sides agree on the utmost importance of reaching agreement at UNFCCC COP 21 on an ambitious Protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the UNFCCC (the 'Paris Agreement') applicable to all Parties. In order to ensure stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system, the Paris Agreement needs to include a long-term goal and a dynamic ambition mechanism. A robust framework for transparency and accountability will enable effective processes for stocktaking as to whether Parties are collectively on track to achieve the long term goal, and strengthening Parties' emissions reduction targets.
4. Both sides agree to take into account the specific needs and special situation of the least developed countries in order to increase their resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change.

5. Both sides declare their intention to play a pro-active role in reaching an ambitious and legally-binding Paris Agreement, both as individual parties to the UNFCCC and when negotiating in the context of UNFCCC Party groupings.
6. Both sides have put into place ambitious climate mitigation policies, have included adaptation action strategically in their development and growth strategies, and are determined to further increase the synergies between mitigation and adaptation action.

#### Bhutan and Climate Change

7. Bhutan delivered its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the future Paris Agreement to the UNFCCC Secretariat on 30 September 2015. As per its INDC, Bhutan reconfirms its target to remain carbon neutral, by ensuring that the country's emission of greenhouse gases does not exceed the sink capacity of its forests.
8. Forests currently cover around 70 percent of Bhutan's land area. In its INDC and its Constitution, Bhutan commits itself to maintain, as a minimum, 60 percent of land area under forest cover.
9. Hydropower accounts for almost all electricity generation in Bhutan. Various other mitigation policies and initiatives are also in place, such as sustainable land management practices, access to enhanced cooking appliances in rural areas, improved livestock management, promotion of organic agriculture, and promotion of zero emission vehicles.
10. As a land-locked and least developed country with a fragile mountainous environment, Bhutan includes the issues of adaptation and means of implementation in its INDC. The scale of funding available to address sustainable development needs including climate change mitigation and adaptation action will be significantly higher than presently available. Therefore, Bhutan calls on the international community to support its efforts, as described in its INDC.

11. The international community recognizes the extraordinary ambition of Bhutan's climate change efforts. A recent independent assessment of the 'Climate Action Tracker' of four EU-based think tanks, for example, considers the country's climate change policies as exemplary, with Bhutan being the only Party to UNFCCC described as a 'role model'.

#### The EU and Climate Change

12. The INDC of the EU and its Member States was delivered to the UNFCCC Secretariat on 6 March 2015. It is fully committed to the UNFCCC negotiating process with a view to adopting a legally binding agreement applicable to all Parties at COP 21.
13. The EU is committed to a binding target of an at least 40% domestic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990, as set out in the conclusions by the European Council of October 2014.
14. This target represents a significant progression beyond its current undertaking of a 20% emission reduction commitment by 2020 compared to 1990. It is in line with the EU objective, in the context of necessary reductions by developed countries as a group, according to the IPCC, to reduce its emissions by 80-95% by 2050 compared to 1990. Furthermore, it is consistent with the need for at least halving global emissions by 2050 compared to 1990. The EU and its Member States have already reduced their emissions by around 19% from 1990 levels while GDP has grown by more than 44% over the same period.
15. The EU looks forward to discussing with other Parties the fairness and ambition of INDCs in the context of the objective to maintain global temperature rises below 2°C, as well as their aggregate contribution to that objective and ways to collectively increase ambition further.

#### Bilateral cooperation

16. Development cooperation is a central element in EU-Bhutan relations. The EU is tripling its assistance from €14 (2007-2013) million to €42 million (2014-2020), focusing on Civil Society/Local Authorities and Sustainable Agriculture/Forestry.

17. More specifically, the EU supports Bhutan in enhancing the resilience of rural households to the effects of climate change, as well as the sustainability of renewable natural resources through the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA).
18. Other EU Member States, as well as other international partners, also support Bhutan in its efforts on climate change.
19. The EU and Bhutan declare their intention to further intensify their cooperation on climate change, focusing on enhanced support for the implementation of Bhutan's INDC. They call on other Parties in a position to do so to join this effort, taking into account Bhutan's extraordinary ambition. As Bhutan's INDC states, 'there is no need greater, or more important, than keeping the planet safe for life to continue'.

For the European Union:  
[Vice-President/Commissioner]

For the Kingdom of Bhutan:  
[Minister]

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