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Foreign Affairs

Trade issues

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Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of
Luxembourg

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

ITEMS DEBATED

TRADE AND INVESTMENT POLICY

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Recalling the European Council Conclusions of 7/8 February 2013 and its previous Conclusions on Trade of 21 November 2014, the Council broadly welcomes the Communication from the Commission of 14 October 2015 on "Trade for All: Towards a more responsible trade and investment policy". The Council takes note of the Communication's conclusions and recommendations, which pave the way for an ambitious trade and investment agenda, in line with the EU's external relations and other relevant policies.
2. The Council remains fully committed to a strong, rules-based multilateral trading system and strongly supports the Commission's ambitious approach in this regard. It supports the further strengthening of the multilateral system, including dispute settlement as one of its central pillars, on the basis of a robust and effective WTO that responds to current and future global trade challenges, and which better reflects the capacities of other WTO members to contribute to the system. A successful WTO Ministerial Conference (MC10) in Nairobi with concrete, balanced and meaningful outcomes and progress on the remaining issues of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) will be important to foster trust and confidence in the multilateral trading system and boost international trade. Following the ratification by the EU of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), the Council now expects other WTO partners which have not yet done so to fulfil all the required procedural steps without delay, so that companies, in particular in developing countries, can experience the tangible benefits of the TFA as soon as possible. The EU is also committed to exploring ways to make the multilateral trading system work better in the future and is open to considering the addition of new issues to the future trade agenda.
3. The Council looks forward to swift progress in plurilateral negotiations, including the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) and, by MC10, the expansion of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) and a significant outcome on the Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA). These agreements, and any new plurilateral initiatives among WTO members, should contribute to stronger global trade and to more growth and jobs, and should act as building blocks for future multilateral agreements.

4. The Council supports the conclusion of ambitious, comprehensive and mutually beneficial bilateral trade and investment agreements and calls on the Commission to work to advance negotiations with the US, Japan and key partners in Latin America, and in the Asia-Pacific region. It welcomes the strong positive results stemming from the implementation of the EU-South Korea Free Trade Agreement, which is the first and most ambitious new generation bilateral trade deal ever implemented by the EU. The Council also welcomes progress achieved in the context of the Economic Partnership Agreements with ACP countries and looks forward to swiftly moving ahead with signature, ratification and implementation of these agreements. Deepening the trade and economic integration of the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood with the EU should also be pursued, taking into account the different ambitions of partner countries, in order to further develop an area of shared stability, security and prosperity.
5. The Council welcomes the ambitious programme of future bilateral trade negotiations set out by the Commission in its Communication, and underlines the need to consider any decision to open negotiations on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the EU's offensive and defensive interests, broader political context, as well as prioritising those negotiations that will provide most benefit in terms of growth and jobs. Bilateral, regional and plurilateral agreements should complement each other, be transparent, consistent and contribute to a stronger multilateral trading system under WTO rules.
6. The Council agrees that trade should benefit all, whether consumers, workers or economic operators and be coherent with other EU policies. It stresses the importance of national and European economic, social, environmental and labour market policies to help workers and businesses adjust to the process of continuous change in the global economy, making sure that they enhance their international competitiveness, harness new market opportunities and that the benefits of globalisation are fairly distributed and negative impacts mitigated. The Council underlines that EU trade agreements will not lead to lower levels of consumer, health, environmental or social and labour protection standards, and that any changes to levels of protection can only be upward and need to respect fully governments' right to regulate.
7. The worldwide economic shifts outside the EU will require Europe to further tap into the new centres of global growth in order to consolidate economic recovery and create more and better jobs to address continued unemployment, especially among young people, on our continent. Taking into account the EU's interests and specificities, trade agreements should provide equal opportunities across EU Member States, regions, including outermost regions and overseas territories of the EU, and all relevant sectors, including industry, agriculture and services. In this context, the Council underlines the need to facilitate and improve the integration of European companies in global value chains, in particular small and medium sized enterprises.

8. Given the importance of small and medium sized enterprises in the EU, their key role in job creation and their significant contribution to EU trade, the Council stresses the need to cut trading costs for SMEs through streamlining customs procedures, reducing non-tariff barriers and regulatory burdens, and strengthening trade enabling services. Therefore, the Council welcomes the Commission's intention to address these issues through provisions dedicated to SMEs in all trade and investment negotiations, in order to enhance the effective use of trade preferences by SMEs.
9. As the world's largest exporter of digitally deliverable services, the EU needs an ambitious and pro-active digital trade strategy in order to reap the benefits of digitalisation, in line with the Digital Single Market and relevant policies. This includes addressing new types of trade barriers which European businesses of all sizes face, such as non-transparent rules, undue government interference, and unjustified data localisation and data storage requirements. The Council stresses the need to create a global level playing field in the area of digital trade and strongly supports the Commission's intention to pursue this goal in full compliance with and without prejudice to the EU's data protection and data privacy rules, which are not negotiated in or affected by trade agreements.
10. The Council recalls that trade in services is becoming all the more important for the EU economy and is closely interlinked with trade in goods. EU trade policy therefore needs to aim at improving market access for both goods and services together, as well as facilitating the mobility of highly skilled service providers and professionals, including recognition of their qualifications. The Council also reiterates that EU trade and investment agreements do not and will not require governments to privatise any public service, or prevent governments, at any level, from protecting, supporting or regulating the provision of public services in areas such as water, education, culture, health or social services, nor from expanding the range of services they supply to the public.
11. The Council underlines that investment, both inward and outward, is essential for Europe's economy and companies to succeed. Regarding investment policy, which is an area of shared competence and responsibility, the Council stresses the need to promote and protect investments, and to maintain a level playing field for all investors. It welcomes the Commission's innovative and ambitious approach to modernise investment protection, and takes note of the transmission of a negotiating text proposal to the United States in this regard. The Council further takes note of the Commission's intention to consider this approach, where appropriate, in other EU trade agreements and to work towards the establishment of a multilateral investment court as a final goal. The Council welcomes the renewed pledge to respect governments' right to regulate.

12. The Council underlines the need to seize the benefits of open trade in a spirit of reciprocity and mutual benefit, and taking into account third countries' level of development. Open trade also depends on and benefits from fair and undistorted competition. It is therefore of utmost importance to fight all forms of protectionism by reducing barriers to trade, including as regards non-tariff trade barriers, ensuring better market access, promoting appropriate investment conditions including as regards investment protection, enforcing and promoting intellectual property rights (including geographical indications, patents, designs, trademarks and copyright), opening up public procurement markets, and securing access to energy, raw materials and components. It encourages the Commission to continue its efforts for market opening, reinforced international regulatory co-operation, raising global standards, as well as tackling trade barriers and unfair trade practices, including through using the full range of EU trade policy instruments. It also supports the Commission in its efforts to ensure compliance and enforcement of WTO rules and the better implementation of the EU's own bilateral trade and investment agreements.
13. The Council acknowledges that trade policy and a better implementation of the EU's agreements are a joint responsibility of the Commission, Member States, the European Parliament and stakeholders, building on an effective cooperation and timely consultations, and welcomes the proposed enhanced partnership for implementation with a view to maximising the benefits stemming from trade and investment agreements. The Council recalls the importance of ensuring the non-discrimination of Member States as well as the integrity of the single market when it comes to trade preferences granted by third countries. It welcomes the Commission's intention to improve "ex-ante" impact assessments, to report annually on the implementation of FTAs and to intensify its work on "ex-post" impact evaluations
14. A responsible EU trade policy must be accompanied by a high level of transparency and an effective communication with citizens about the benefits and challenges of trade and open markets. The intensification of the debate around the EU's trade policy is an opportunity to better involve all stakeholders in the preparation, negotiation and implementation of our different initiatives in the field. This should respect the existing institutional balance and applicable rules regarding classified information, and not prejudice the EU's negotiating positions or international relations.

15. Only through an ambitious and responsible trade policy agenda, which takes account of other relevant policies, will the EU be able to shape globalisation and participate in the drawing up of robust international rules in future. The Council is therefore committed to ensuring that trade agreements safeguard the values on which the EU is founded, as well as EU standards and regulatory practices. This includes strengthening measures to support sustainable development and good governance through trade agreements, multi-stakeholder initiatives and beyond, with an emphasis on free, fair and ethical trade, environmental protection, labour rights, decent working conditions, as well as human rights, health and consumer protection, animal welfare, ensuring the protection of cultural diversity and promoting development through trade, including Aid for Trade and the 2030 Agenda. The Council attaches great importance to ensuring the inclusion and effective implementation of related provisions in all trade agreements and the Generalised System of Preferences.

16. The EU needs to be at the forefront of the fight against corruption and the Council looks forward to the Commission's proposals on how to tackle related issues in trade agreements. Corporate social responsibility and due diligence, in particular regarding global value chains, needs to be increased. The EU will support partner countries, and in particular least developed countries, in taking advantage of responsible global value chains to foster inclusive and sustainable growth, thereby creating jobs and strengthening competitiveness."

WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

The Commission reported on preparations for the 10th World Trade Organisation ministerial conference, to be held in Nairobi from 15 to 18 December 2015.

The Council discussed the EU's strategy for the meeting. It assessed the overall balance to be achieved between the main elements in discussion – namely development issues, export competition and transparency – and considered priorities for work after the Nairobi conference.

It underscored the importance of strengthening of the multilateral trading system, and reiterated its commitment to WTO trade negotiations.

The Council will hold a meeting in Nairobi on 15 December 2015, in the margins of the ministerial conference.

The current round of world trade talks started at the fourth WTO ministerial conference, held in Doha, in 2001. They are aimed at facilitating global trade, with lower trade barriers and revised trade rules, and improving trading opportunities for developing countries. Following a stalemate in the talks in 2011, ministers agreed to pursue efforts in areas where progress could be achieved. This led to agreement on a more limited work programme at the 9th ministerial conference, held in Bali in December 2013.

EU-US TRADE AND INVESTMENT NEGOTIATIONS

The Council discussed developments and next steps in negotiations on a comprehensive trade agreement with the United States, the "transatlantic trade and investment partnership" (TTIP).

The aim is to finalise the negotiations during the term of office of the current US administration. The coming months will be crucial for success. The Council called on the Commission to step up its efforts to obtain an ambitious outcome in all of the key areas of the negotiations.

The TTIP talks are structured around three components: market access, provisions on regulatory issues and non-tariff barriers, and rules.

Eleven negotiating rounds have been held, the latest in Miami from 19 to 23 October 2015. Negotiations in Miami covered all areas under discussion, with the exception of investment protection. No date has yet been confirmed for the next round of negotiations, which is expected to take place in February 2016. Intersessional meetings will be held in the meantime to enable the pace of negotiations to accelerate.

The Commission is leading the negotiations on behalf of the EU and its member states, on the basis of a mandate agreed by the Council in June 2013. The Council decided in October 2014 to make public its negotiating directives for the TTIP negotiations.

[EU negotiating mandate for TTIP](#)

[Commission webpage on trade with the US](#)

[Report on the 11th round of TTIP negotiations](#)

EU-MERCOSUR FREE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

The Commission reported on the state of talks on a free trade agreement with Mercosur, South America's largest economic bloc. It assessed the prospects for progress before the end of 2015 with a possible exchange of tariff offers.

The Council held an exchange of views. It reaffirmed the importance of concluding a comprehensive and ambitious accord that meets the EU's offensive and defensive interests. It took note of the views expressed by member states, notably as regards a possible exchange of offers on the basis of a reduced coverage of tariff lines.

The agreement is intended to cover trade in industrial and agricultural goods, as well as services, establishment and government procurement. It would also involve the improvement of rules in areas such as government procurement, intellectual property, customs and trade facilitation and technical barriers to trade. It would be part of a region-to-region association agreement with political and cooperation provisions.

Negotiations were launched in 2000, but have been suspended at times since then. At an EU-Latin America and Caribbean summit in Brussels in June 2015, the EU reconfirmed its commitment to a comprehensive free trade agreement with Mercosur.

[Commission webpage on trade with Mercosur](#)

EU-ASIA FREE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS - JAPAN AND ASEAN

The Council discussed various trade negotiations underway with the countries of Asia, focusing on Japan and the countries of ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The Council reaffirmed its support to the Commission for the negotiation of an ambitious and comprehensive agreement with Japan, with a view to concluding the talks as early as possible in 2016.

It looked forward to finalisation of negotiations on the last part of a free trade agreement with Vietnam.

It welcomed the imminent launch of negotiations on a free trade agreement with the Philippines.

The Council considered that the resumption of bi-regional negotiations with ASEAN should remain a strategic objective in the medium term.

Japan

Negotiations on a free trade agreement with Japan were launched in March 2013, on the basis of a mandate issued by the Council in November 2012. The latest round was held in Brussels from 22 October to 6 November 2015. The next will take place in Tokyo from 30 November to 4 December 2015.

ASEAN

Talks on a free trade agreement with the ASEAN region as a whole were suspended in early 2009. The Council decided in December 2009 to pursue negotiations with ASEAN countries individually, whilst maintaining the strategic objective of a region-to-region free trade agreement in the long run. It approved the launch of negotiations with Singapore (in December 2009), Malaysia (in September 2010), Vietnam (in May 2012), Thailand (in February 2013) and the Philippines (in November 2015).

In October 2013, the Council amended its original mandate to allow the Commission to negotiate provisions on investment protection.

Negotiations with Singapore were finalised in December 2012 and with Vietnam in July 2015 (with the exception of provisions on investment protection). The latest round of talks with Malaysia was held in April 2012, and talks with Thailand are currently on hold due to the political situation in the country. Preparations for talks with Indonesia are ongoing.

[Commission webpage on trade with Japan](#)

[Commission webpage on trade with ASEAN](#)

OTHER BUSINESS– *Trilateral consultations with Ukraine and Russia*

The Commission briefed the Council on preparations for a trilateral meeting with the Ukrainian and Russian trade ministers on 1 December 2015. The meeting comes ahead of provisional application, on 1 January 2016, of free trade provisions under the EU-Ukraine association agreement.

– *Crisis in the European steel industry*

The Council discussed challenges facing the European steel industry stemming from a fall in world demand. This follows an extraordinary meeting of the Competitiveness Council on 9 November 2015.

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– *Trade and investment relations with China*

Over lunch, ministers discussed relations with China, specifically:

- the issue of market economy status, following China's accession to the WTO in 2001;
- trade barriers in China;
- EU anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures;
- negotiations on an EU-China investment agreement.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

TRADE POLICY

WTO: customs duties

The Council adopted a decision setting out the EU's position within the ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization as supporting an extension of the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions and the moratorium on non-violation and situation complaints.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EU - Ukraine Association Council

The Council adopted the EU's position in view of the second meeting of the EU - Ukraine Association Council on 7 December 2015.

COHESION POLICY

EU strategy for the alpine region

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the European Union strategy for the alpine region (13528/15):

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION RECALLING the European Council Conclusions of 19-20 December 2013¹ inviting the Commission, in cooperation with Member States, to elaborate an EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (hereinafter: "EUSALP" or the "Strategy");

- (1) ACKNOWLEDGING the Commission's Communication concerning the EUSALP², and COMMENDING the Commission on its extensive consultation process conducted when preparing the Communication;

¹ EUCO 217/13.

² COM (2015) 366 final, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning a European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region.

General considerations

- (2) RECALLING the Council Conclusions of 22 October 2013 on the added value of macro-regional strategies¹, and that the Council recommended when considering the creation of new macro-regional strategies to ensure that: a) there are particular needs of strategic importance for the macro-regions for improved high level cooperation in solving common challenges as well as using opportunities, b) involvement of the EU is appropriate and existing EU horizontal policies would be reinforced, c) the appraisal of the added value at the EU and macro-regional level is evidence-based, d) there is clearly expressed political will from both the Member States concerned and their involved regions for such an approach;
- (3) RECALLING the Council Conclusions of 21 October 2014 on the governance of macro-regional strategies²;
- (4) RECOGNISING the potential of macro-regional strategies, as an integrated framework relating to Member States and non-EU countries in the same geographical area in order to address common challenges and to benefit from strengthened cooperation, to contribute to Treaty-based objectives including economic, social and territorial cohesion of the EU, therefore supporting the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy objectives and in particular the promotion of growth and jobs;
- (5) NOTING in particular that existing and future macro-regional strategies provide an important instrument to pursue the objective of territorial cohesion in the areas concerned, because of their integrated and place-based approach;
- (6) STRESSING that macro-regional strategies are based on the principles of no new EU funds, no additional EU formal structures and no new EU legislation, and are an instrument for optimal use of existing financial resources, better use of existing institutions and better implementation of existing legislation;
- (7) REITERATING the need for coordination between relevant EU policies as well as between EU and national, regional and local policies having an impact on territorial cohesion, respecting the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality;
- (8) STRESSING the need for macro-regional strategies to be result-oriented, promote concrete achievements and ensure accountability;

¹ Doc. 14926/13 ADD 1.

² Doc. 13374/14.

The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region

- (9) **RECALLS** that the Strategy will affect around 80 million people living in 48 regions in seven States, of which five are EU Member States (Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia) and two are non-EU countries (Liechtenstein and Switzerland);
- (10) **ENDORSES** the Strategy, as set out by the Commission's communication, and **TAKES NOTE** of the annexed Action Plan elaborated by the Commission, in cooperation with Member States, and on the basis of a public consultation with the participating States and Regions, involving all relevant partners and stakeholders at national, regional and local level;
- (11) **RECOGNISES** the common challenges and the particular needs of strategic importance of the territories concerned as identified in the Strategy. **RECOMMENDS** that the EUSALP enhances solidarities and synergies between mountainous and, non-mountainous areas, urban and rural areas and peripheral regions surrounding the Alps. **ACKNOWLEDGES** its added value in line with the Council Conclusions of 22 October 2013 on the added value of macro-regional strategies¹;
- (12) **WELCOMES** the active cooperation of all interested international, national and regional and local organisations and communities in areas where actions of mutual interest can be identified, taking into account the initiatives of the civil society; **STRESSES** that the Strategy is the expression of a clear political will, and the result of a long political, administrative and technical process among the seven States and 48 Regions participating in the Strategy, and, **TAKING NOTE** that the macro-regional strategies are dynamic processes, **ACKNOWLEDGES** that the Strategy remains open to future developments;
- (13) **APPRECIATES** that the Strategy addresses the challenges of the Alpine Region by selecting 3 Thematic Policy Areas focusing on topics with the highest macro-regional relevance, such as 1) economic growth and innovation, 2) mobility and connectivity and 3) environment and energy, as well as Governance and institutional capacity as a cross-cutting policy area;
- (14) **RECOGNISES**, as described in the Action Plan of the Strategy, the challenges of the Alpine Region facing demographic trends, characterised particularly by the combined effects of ageing, low population density in the mountain areas and new migration models, the high vulnerability to climate change and its foreseeable effects on the environment, biodiversity and the living conditions of its inhabitants;

- (15) **STRESSES** that the Alpine Region, due to its central location in Europe, is of interest to all EU Member States for a number of EU policies, in particular in the following fields:
- the Region, which comprises some of the most dynamic European regions, can build on its high competitiveness and enhance the already existing opportunities, such as its innovation capacity or its strong potential in tourism, based on the preservation and valorisation of cultural and natural heritage, to increase employment;
 - improving sustainable transport infrastructure, its intermodal connectivity and interoperability in the region with a clear trend to reduce emissions, hence supporting a balanced development between North and South as well as East and West;
 - the safeguarding of the alpine biodiversity by preserving its integrity and its ecological connectivity. Actions and projects to be implemented under this Strategy should contribute towards the targets to be agreed at COP21, including supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy as well as promoting climate change mitigation and adaptation, efficient disaster risk management including prevention.
- (16) **UNDERLINES** the importance of ensuring mutually beneficial interaction between the core area and the metropolises with regard to the need to establish sustainable and balanced models in the field of energy as well as of preserving and valorising natural resources in view of the particular vulnerability of the environment of the Alpine Region;
- (17) **REITERATES** that the Strategy is financially neutral, in the sense that, through its coordinated approach, it aims at a more efficient and effective use of existing instruments and funds;
- (18) **ACKNOWLEDGES** that the Strategy builds on:
- long experience of a large number of cooperation structures already operating in the area such as: Alpine Convention¹, Alpine Space INTERREG Programme, and other ad hoc structures;

¹ The Alpine Convention is an international treaty, entered into force in 1995 for the sustainable development and the protection of the Alps, ratified by the alpine countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia and Switzerland) and the European Union.

- the lessons learnt from the existing macro-regional strategies: need to focus on a limited number of challenges and/or opportunities, and to secure ownership, commitment and leadership from the participating States, regional and local authorities, need to establish, at an early stage, a sound governance and management system with a clear division of tasks and roles;
- the Grenoble "*Political resolution* towards a European Union Strategy for the Alpine region" of 18 October 2013, stressing the joint will of the States and Regions of the Alpine region to support the elaboration of a macro-region for the Alpine region;
- the "Milan Declaration of the Alpine States and Regions" of 1 December 2014, emphasising the importance of the future EUSALP in constituting a tailor-made contribution to the growth of the region in line with Europe 2020 Strategy objectives and building on its cultural and natural heritage;
- the extensive public online consultation from July to October 2014 with close to 400 contributions and its outcomes.

(19) UNDERLINES that the timing of the Strategy's launch coincides with the start of the implementation of the European Structural Investment Funds 2014-2020 programming period, which helps mobilising relevant policies and programmes in support of the Strategy; RECALLS that the 2014-2020 legislative package paves the way for better embedding macro-regional strategies in the programming and implementation of relevant EU policies where appropriate;

Internal Governance

- (20) WELCOMES the Milan Declaration and the commitment "to carry out the necessary actions to improve the coordination of funds available at the EU, state, regional or local level, based on the awareness that tangible results for citizens can only be achieved by enabling the development of synergies between the various planning levels. The participating States and Regions put all efforts in using the potential of the existing 2014-2020 financial framework.";
- (21) INVITES the Commission to:
- a. keep playing a leading role in strategic coordination of the Strategy, where its involvement brings a clear added value, in partnership with the participating States, regional and local authorities, and in accordance with the subsidiarity and proportionality principles; and ensure that the Strategy is taken into account in relevant EU policy initiatives and programme planning;

- b. support, in cooperation with the participating States, regional and local authorities, the aims of the Strategy and the implementation of the agreed actions by promoting the coordination of existing EU funds and instruments, and by cooperating closely with the relevant financial institutions necessary for the realisation and funding of the Strategy;
 - c. promote the full and effective involvement of the non-EU countries participating in the Strategy;
 - d. promote the involvement of the Alpine Convention in the implementation of the Strategy, with a view to building on the Convention's expertise in the protection and sustainable development of the Alps, and exploring synergies;
 - e. promote, also with the support of Eurostat, the collection of reliable and comparable data concerning the Region, at the adequate statistical level, and support the development of adequate monitoring and evaluation tools also making recourse, as appropriate, to technical assistance funds directly managed by the Commission;
 - f. promote active participation of all relevant partners and stakeholders, including relevant cooperation structures, non-governmental organisations and institutions, social and economic partners, the civil society and the private sector, in all steps of the Strategy's implementation.
- (22) INVITES all actors in their different roles in the implementation of the Strategy to ensure the most effective use of existing national and EU resources, including:
- a. the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds and programmes supporting Treaty-based objectives, according to the specific nature, objectives and governance, fully respecting the content of the already adopted programmes; in particular, the Alpine Space programme should support the implementation and governance of the Strategy through the priorities and funding foreseen for this purpose;
 - b. the opportunities provided in the context of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI).
- (23) INVITES all actors in their different roles to ensure adequate visibility, communication and awareness raising about the Strategy's objectives and results;

(24) CALLS upon the Member States participating in the Strategy to:

- a. establish in their respective countries key conditions for good implementation and exploitation of the EU added value of the Strategy, including political support, ownership, leadership and responsibility, taking into account the views of the Council on the governance of macro-regional strategies;
- b. safeguard the alignment of relevant policies and funds at national, regional and local level, including, where appropriate and in line with the Regulations, the embedding of the Strategy into the programmes co-financed by the ESI Funds for the 2014-2020 period and other EU relevant programmes, and ensure that the Strategy's objectives and actions are appropriately considered in the design and implementation of relevant national, regional and local policies and programmes, and *vice versa*;
- c. set up, in partnership with the Commission and the non-EU countries participating in the Strategy, an effective multilevel governance system and effective and efficient procedures and modalities enhancing continuity, ownership and visibility for the implementation of the Strategy, in accordance with the Milan Declaration of 1 December 2014, in line with the views of the Council on the governance of macro-regional strategies, fully respecting the institutional and constitutional architecture of the participating States, and the specificities and competences of their administrative structures, in order to ensure a timely start of the Strategy;
- d. encourage and facilitate the full and effective involvement of non-EU countries participating in the Strategy at all levels and in all steps of the implementation of the Strategy, in particular in the definition of concrete actions and projects;
- e. ensure that the partnership principle is respected and fully made operational, by promoting active participation of relevant partners and stakeholders, including the relevant cooperation structures, the existing regional governmental and non-governmental organisations, social and economic partners, the civil society, including through national and regional parliaments, and the private sector, in all steps of the Strategy's implementation, thus creating synergies and enabling knowledge-sharing;
- f. safeguard the involvement of the stakeholders concerned from all levels in the region, evaluate results, consult on revised actions and, where appropriate, develop new approaches.

EU-wide Governance

- (25) STRESSES the importance of due involvement of all EU Member States and all interested stakeholders on transnational, regional and local level, as appropriate, in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region;
 - (26) INVITES the Commission and the Member States to ensure that adequate coordination is established among macro-regional strategies, in particular to ensure that projects and partnerships can be developed across macro-regional strategies as appropriate and where relevant;
 - (27) APPRECIATES the engagement of the States and relevant partners participating in the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region to exchange knowledge and good practices with other mountainous regions and areas in Europe and INVITES these mountainous areas to actively engage in these exchanges;
 - (28) INVITES the Commission to ensure the exchange of best practices between the Strategy and other existing and future ones, as well as to include the Strategy within the competences and activities of the High-Level Group on macro-regional strategies and to reflect on how to improve the effectiveness of this Group in the light of the evolution of the EU macro-regional strategies from 2009 onwards;
 - (29) STRESSES the importance to ensure that the EU Institutions are regularly involved in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy, based on a regular reporting by the Commission;
 - (30) STRESSES its commitment to take into account the implementation of the Strategy, and to that scope, INTENDS to reflect, at the level of its relevant preparatory bodies, on the progress of the implementation of the Strategy with the view to reporting as appropriate;
 - (31) ASKS the Commission to draft a report every two years, starting end 2016, on the implementation of the EUSALP and TAKES NOTE of the Commission's intention to draft a single report every two years, starting end 2016, describing the progress made towards the implementation of all macro-regional strategies, presenting recommendations on possible developments of the Strategies and their Action Plans and/or on how to improve or optimise their implementation, taking into account the particularities of the different strategies."
-