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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

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On:	22 May 2018
To:	Delegations

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Subject:	Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's instruments for financing external actions in 2016 - Council conclusions (22 May 2018)
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Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on the Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's instruments for financing external actions in 2016, as adopted by the Council at its 3618th meeting held on 22 May 2018.

**Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's instruments
for financing external actions in 2016**

Council conclusions

1. The Council welcomes the Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's instruments for financing external actions in 2016 as well as the efforts of the Commission to continue to improve the quality, result-orientation and user-friendliness of the report. The Council considers that the Annual report is a key contribution to inform citizens and stakeholders on how the EU implements its external assistance and the results achieved.
2. The Council underlines the progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presented in the Annual Report. The Council calls on the Commission Services and the EEAS to show how the EU is carrying out actions that reflect the commitment to leave no-one behind, as well as the 2030 Agenda, the European Consensus on Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The Council urges the Commission to continue the work on Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) as a crucial element to achieve the SDGs and an important contribution to the broader objective of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD).
3. The Council underlines that it is essential to use in a comprehensive manner the entire scope of EU policies and tools spanning diplomatic, security, financial, trade, development actions and humanitarian aid. The Council calls for reinforcement of this approach of a 'Shared Vision' and 'Common Action' as advocated in the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, including the advancement towards a more credible, responsive and joined-up Union. The Council stresses that a prosperous European Union is the basis for a stronger Europe in the world and that prosperity must be shared and requires fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) worldwide, including in Europe.

4. In particular, the Council commends the implementation of the reviewed European Neighbourhood Policy including the support to political and economic reforms, democratic transformation and stabilisation based on differentiated approach and greater ownership. The Council also takes note of the Commission's assessment on the implementation of the Enlargement Strategy, as set out in the Communication of EU Enlargement Policy of November 2016, notably the decisive contribution made to regional cooperation and connectivity in the Western Balkans.
5. The Council stresses that the levels and geography of poverty and inequality have shifted and developing countries have become increasingly diversified. An increasing proportion of the world's poor is in fragile and conflict-affected states and in sub-Saharan Africa, although substantial pockets of poverty remain in many middle-income countries. The Council recalls that the EU and its Member States are targeting their support where the need is greatest and where it can have most impact. The Council recalls its conclusions of 19 June 2017¹ which emphasise the importance of an equal, sustainable and mutually beneficial Africa-EU partnership in a spirit of shared ownership and responsibility.
6. The Council welcomes the EU's efforts to provide needs-based, life-saving assistance to people affected by humanitarian crises, including protracted crises, throughout the world. The Council notes that humanitarian crises are growing in number, complexity and severity. The Council stresses the need for sustained efforts by the EU and its Member States to prevent crises and to tackle their root causes, including those related to climate change, and adequately address the growing needs.
7. The Council welcomes the intensification of EU efforts in the field of environment and climate change in the implementation of its external instruments, especially the mainstreaming of these topics, which is key to achieve significant progress.

¹ 10454/17

8. The Council reiterates its strong commitment to good governance, democracy and the rule of law as well as the respect for human rights and calls on the EU and its Member States to reinforce the efforts to promote them further as they are fundamental to sustainable development.
9. The Council calls on the Commission to continue reporting on activities related to migration and development, including on the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement. This should include reporting on the effectiveness of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and other EU trust funds.
10. The Council further reiterates the linkages between sustainable development, resilience, fragility, humanitarian action and conflict prevention and peace building. The Council looks forward to the reporting on the humanitarian-development nexus pilot countries.
11. The Council further calls for continued reporting on EU activities related to international peace and security, which should include reporting on urgent responses to political crises and contributions to civilian stabilisation missions.
12. The Council recalls its conclusions on the Gender Action Plan in External Relations 2016-2020² and the strong commitments in the European Consensus on Development to promote gender equality and empowerment across all areas of actions. The Council strongly encourages the Commission to prioritise gender equality and women's and girls' rights and empowerment, and welcomes in this context the choice of gender equality as the theme for the European Development Communication Network's inaugural joint event of 25th of May 2018 as well as at the European Development Days of 5-6 June 2018.³

² 15571/17

³ The network was set up by the Commission and the Member States in response to the Council conclusions of May 2017.

13. The Council commends the EU for its contributions to Financing for Development that sets out the means of implementation needed to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. The Council welcomes that the EU and its Member States reaffirmed their position as the world's largest provider of development funding, contributing more than half of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) globally. The European Commission alone disbursed over EUR 13.1 billion in ODA on behalf of the EU during 2016.
14. The EU and its Member States reaffirm all their individual and collective ODA commitments.⁴ The Council recalls that ODA remains a major source of finance for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and fragile states, which particularly lack domestic capacity to raise finance from other sources.
15. The Council welcomes the EU and Member States' efforts to mobilise and make good use of all available means of implementation for development, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. In particular, it welcomes the Domestic Resource Mobilisation Programme, the Addis Tax Initiative, the EU External Investment Plan and the efforts to increase development effectiveness including through Joint Programming. The Council also stresses the importance of creating the appropriate conditions for increased investment, economic diversification, regional economic integration, enhanced trade and private sector development.
16. The Council takes note of the evaluation lessons in the Annual Report, including the need for improved contextual analysis, the importance of national ownership and strong partnerships between EU and key partners as well as the need to adjust to changes on the ground more rapidly.

⁴ Cf. Council conclusions on "Investing in Sustainable Development" and Annual Report 2018 to the European Council on EU Development Aid Targets

17. The Council recalls its previous conclusions on results-reporting and welcomes the integration in the report of results based on the EU International Cooperation and Development Results Framework. The Council calls on the Commission to continue to improve the quality of reporting by including results of ongoing projects, increased use of sex-disaggregated data and an analysis and assessment of the achievement of objectives. Furthermore, the Council encourages the Commission to further develop reporting with regard to people with disabilities, digitalisation for development, health, education, Joint Implementation and tracking of EU commitments in the next Annual Report.
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