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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

No. prev. doc.: 14634/18

Subject: EU Strategy on India
- Council conclusions (10 December 2018)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on EU Strategy on India, as adopted by the Council at its 3662nd meeting held on 10 December 2018.

Council conclusions on the EU Strategy on India

1. The Council underlines the importance of the Strategic Partnership between the European Union and India, based on shared values of democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, commitment to the rules-based global order and effective multilateralism, sustainable development and a common interest to further develop bilateral cooperation in every respect.
2. The Council endorses the Joint Communication “Elements for a European Union strategy on India” by the High Representative and the European Commission, which, together with these conclusions, provides the policy framework for the EU’s deeper and broader engagement with India over the coming years.
3. The Council sees the articulation and implementation of the new EU Strategy on India as a valuable opportunity for India and the EU to come closer together and enrich their bilateral cooperation for the mutual benefit of their citizens.
4. The Council welcomes the increasing role and responsibility of India on the global stage, through its ambitious foreign policy and fast growing economy. Through their Strategic Partnership, the EU and India aim at jointly promoting peace and security, and strengthening the rules-based global order.
5. The EU and India are strong defenders of multilateralism with the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation at its core. To promote effective multilateralism, the EU will seek to coordinate positions with India to address common challenges and global issues, particularly at the UN, G20, WTO and other multilateral fora. The EU is ready to pursue joint initiatives, bilaterally and at the UN, on all aspects of common interest, notably climate change, rule of law and democracy, the promotion and protection of human rights, including gender equality, women's empowerment and children’s rights, as well as the fight against terrorism.

6. Increased cooperation contributes to both partners' growth and prosperity, as well as to their joint commitment to implementing Agenda 2030 and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The EU is a key partner for India's sustainable modernisation and integration in the global economy. The Council underlines the need to further develop this partnership and supports the proposals made in the Joint Communication in this respect.
7. The partnership between the EU and India should benefit from an improved business environment in India, enhanced and fair market access, alignment with international standards and practices, enforcement of intellectual property rights and investment protection. The EU remains firmly committed to working towards a comprehensive, ambitious and mutually beneficial agreement with India on trade and investment, including a solid rules-based component and ambitious provisions on trade and sustainable development. A new framework for investment protection in line with the EU approach would also attract more EU investments to India. In order to advance an ambitious common agenda on economic, trade, investment, and regulatory cooperation, a regular ministerial high level dialogue should be established.
8. The Council welcomes enhanced Indian investments in Europe as a source of economic dynamism. Cooperation should be fostered through regular business summits.
9. Research and innovation cooperation, including on regulatory issues, are crucial in jointly tackling global challenges, supporting India's sustainable modernisation, opening business opportunities and increasing scientific excellence and competitiveness. Cooperation on culture, education and tourism will be further encouraged to deliver social and economic benefits.

10. The EU and India are key promoters of a digital economy aimed at improving daily life for citizens and businesses, enhancing inclusiveness and participation of all persons, in particular women, youth and persons from remote, rural areas. The Council encourages increased regulatory cooperation aimed at facilitating data flows while ensuring a high level of protection of personal data, as well as promotion and protection of human rights, which apply online as well as offline.
11. Recognising the vast potential for growth and prosperity in Asia, the Council supports increased cooperation with India to address the infrastructure needs in the region. The EU and India share a common vision of connectivity between Europe and Asia based on environmental, economic, social and fiscal sustainability, one which provides a level playing field for business, respects international standards and enhances sound governance. The EU will enhance engagement with India on sustainable, climate-resilient maritime and land transport, as well as quality infrastructure, including through the European Investment Bank, and will jointly promote connectivity activities under the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM).
12. The EU and India share common challenges related to sustainable modernisation of their economies. The Council welcomes the joint activities to address these challenges in the context of the implementation of the Partnerships for Water, Urbanisation, Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy. The EU and India also share a common interest in ensuring a secure, sustainable, affordable and low emission energy supply for all. The Council invites the Commission to strengthen practical, results oriented cooperation in these areas. The Council reiterates the need for full compliance with international environmental and nuclear safety standards.

13. The Council welcomes India's contribution to tackling global challenges such as sustainable development, climate change, environment protection, as well as biodiversity, ocean governance, humanitarian and disaster relief, space safety and security and earth observation. Cooperation on climate change should seek the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement and the Montreal Protocol. Building on the existing EU-India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership, the establishment of a formal India-EU climate change dialogue, along with enhanced EU support to the International Solar Alliance and cooperation in the International Renewable Energy Agency, would contribute to this goal. A renewed partnership on development cooperation would facilitate delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals, including in third countries, and coordination in international fora.
14. The Council supports increased cooperation with India on common security interests, such as counter-terrorism, radicalisation, cyber security, hybrid threats, maritime security, and non-proliferation and disarmament. Cooperation on crisis management, including military-to-military relations, should be pursued in order to enhance mutual confidence, joint assessments and responses.
15. The Council invites the High Representative to enhance cooperation with India on key foreign policy issues through regular exchanges and coordination, particularly on Iran/JCPOA, Afghanistan, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the protection of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Dialogue and cooperation should also aim at supporting regional integration in Asia and the Indian Ocean – an area vital to global prosperity and security. The Council invites the EEAS to enhance its security dialogue with India and other partners in the region in line with the Council conclusions on security cooperation in and with Asia of 28 May 2018.
16. The Council encourages a stronger joint approach between European institutions and Member States with a view to improving coordination, cohesiveness and effectiveness of their respective actions in relation to India. The Council underlines the importance of modernising the institutional architecture of the 1994 EU-India cooperation agreement in line with new common aspirations and global challenges. Therefore it invites the Commission and the High Representative to reflect on the opportunity of a Strategic Partnership Agreement.

17. The Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to take forward work on the implementation of the priorities identified in the EU Strategy on India in close cooperation with Member States, and taking into account their competences. The implementation of the Strategy will be assessed by the Council every year.
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