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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

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Subject: European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 25/2018 entitled "Floods Directive: progress in assessing risks, while planning and implementation need to improve"
- Council conclusions

Delegations will find in the Annex the Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 25/2018 entitled "Floods Directive: progress in assessing risks, while planning and implementation need to improve", as adopted by the Council at its 3676th meeting held on 5 March 2019.

European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 25/2018 entitled "Floods Directive: progress in assessing risks, while planning and implementation need to improve"

- Council conclusions -

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING the Council conclusions on Sustainable Water Management of 17 October 2016 ¹ and the Council conclusions on Integrated flood management within the European Union of 12 May 2011 ²;

RECALLING the main EU legislative instruments on water policy, in particular, the Water Framework Directive ³ and the Floods Directive ⁴, the latter aiming at reducing and managing the risks that floods pose to human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity:

1. WELCOMES the European Court of Auditor's Special Report 25/2018 entitled "Floods Directive: progress in assessing risks, while planning and implementation need to improve" ⁵;
2. TAKES NOTE of the Observations and Recommendations of the Special Report and ACKNOWLEDGES them as a timely and important contribution to the ongoing Fitness Check of the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive; STRESSES, however, that this Fitness Check should take into consideration the specificities of all geographical regions;

¹ 13342/16.

² 9241/11 + COR 1.

³ Directive 2000/60/EC of 23 October 2000 (OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p.1).

⁴ Directive 2007/60/EC of 23 October 2007 (OJEU L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27).

⁵ This Special Report was based on audit visits in selected river basins of the following nine Member States: Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Romania.

3. WELCOMES the Report's conclusion that the Floods Directive has improved coordination between the European Commission and the Member States and cross-border cooperation, and played a positive role in flood risk assessment and management, as well as, in the development of activities to raise flood awareness among citizens;
4. IS AWARE that notwithstanding progress achieved in flood risk assessment, improvements are still possible when preparing and implementing Member States' Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMP), in particular, in setting objectives, in identifying financial needs and corresponding resources, in linking projects to FRMP's set priorities and in better integrating the effects of climate change;
5. STRESSES the importance of coordinating the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive and UNDERScores the report's findings that such coordination usually results in synergies; CALLS UPON the Member States and the Commission, as appropriate, to ensure coherence in the implementation of relevant policies and legislation, notably, by ensuring that new floods infrastructure is in compliance with the Water Framework Directive;
6. In this regard, EMPHASISES the benefits of the use of green infrastructure to prevent and/or reduce flood risk and REITERATES its call for Member States to seek a balanced combination of green and grey infrastructure when implementing EU water policy objectives ⁶, while RECOGNISING Member States diverse geography, environment and climate conditions;
7. RECOGNISES that serious floods have become more frequent in Europe and that climate change is an aggravating factor, triggering changes in precipitation, weather patterns and sea levels, EMPHASISES that there is a need to improve the knowledge and modelling of the impact of climate change on all sources of floods, and CALLS UPON the Commission to work together with the Member States to reinforce and/or develop appropriate tools that better analyse and forecast these impacts;

⁶ Council conclusions on Sustainable Water Management of 17 October 2016, paragraph 6 (13342/16).

8. CONSIDERING the potentially increasing impact of floods in Europe, TAKES NOTE of the report's findings on floods insurance coverage and, RECOGNISING the positive role that insurance could have in reinforcing preventive action and improving economic recovery in the wake of a disaster, CALLS UPON Member States to raise public awareness of the benefits of flood insurance and to explore cooperative measures between the public and private sectors to increase coverage;
9. EMPHASISES the importance of also using land use and spatial planning as a tool for preventive measures in the framework of flood risk management, particularly for areas of potentially significant flood risk;
10. LOOKS FORWARD to receiving the Commission's report of the Fitness Check of the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive and to further discussions among Member States and other stakeholders in that context.

