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DEVGEN 100
SUSTDEV 82
ACP 54
COHAFA 43
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WTO 133
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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council

On: 16 May 2019

To: Delegations

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Subject: 2018 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's
instruments for financing external actions in 2017
- Council conclusions (16 May 2019)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on the 2018 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's instruments for financing external actions in 2017, as adopted by the Council at its 3690th meeting held on 16 May 2019.

**Council conclusions on the 2018 Annual Report on the implementation
of the European Union's instruments for financing external actions in 2017**

1. The Council welcomes the Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's instruments for financing external actions in 2017¹. In this context, the Council encourages further efforts by the Commission to improve the critical reflection of results as well as the quality, timeliness and readability of the report. The Council stresses that the Annual Report is a key contribution to inform citizens and stakeholders on the implementation and results of EU external action.
2. The Council calls for reinforced 'Shared Vision', 'Common Action' and 'working better together' as advocated in the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy and in the new European Consensus on Development, including through advancing towards a more credible, responsive and joined-up Union.
3. The Council highlights the importance of pursuing effective multilateralism and of strengthening rules-based international cooperation as well as relevant global initiatives such as the Global Climate Change Alliance Plus, the Global Partnership for Education and the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The Council stresses the imperative to further strengthen the joint efforts of the EU and its Member States, working together with key partners, in tackling global challenges and using opportunities to effectively contribute to sustainable development and the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions.
4. The Council also reaffirms its unconditional support to human rights, democracy, good governance and the rule of law worldwide and commends efforts to further promote and strengthen these through EU external action, including by empowering local actors and civil society.

¹ 5988/19 + ADD 1 + ADD 2

5. The Council underlines the progress made on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this context, the Council welcomes further work to integrate policy coherence into the overall EU efforts on sustainable development and poverty eradication. It reiterates the EU's commitment to leave no-one behind and to reach those furthest behind first.
6. In particular, the Council commends the implementation of the revised European Neighbourhood Policy, including the support to political, economic and social reforms, democratic transformation and stabilisation, based on a differentiated approach and greater ownership. The Council stresses the importance of supporting stability in the EU's neighbourhood, both in the South and in the East.
7. With regard to the implementation of the EU Enlargement Policy, the Council calls on the Commission to continue strengthening its implementation, in particular with regard to the reform processes related to the rule of law and the focus on the "fundamentals first" approach.
8. The Council welcomes the renewed impetus injected by the 5th African Union-EU Summit held in November 2017 and notes positively the steps taken to strengthen the strategic partnership with Africa. The Council also recognises the particular challenges faced by developing countries in Africa and, in this respect, underlines the importance of targeting ODA to the continent, while fully respecting individual Member States' priorities in development assistance.
9. The Council stresses the importance of gender equality, and reiterates the EU's commitment to promoting women and girls' full enjoyment of human rights and their empowerment. The Council notes with satisfaction that the proportion of EU funded cooperation and development initiatives promoting gender equality (as a principal or significant objective) has risen to 65% and calls for further efforts to reach the GAP target of 85%. The Council recognises the importance of the EU financed Spotlight Initiative, aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, and calls for consistent involvement of EU Member States in its monitoring.

10. The Council also welcomes the revised EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child and encourages further efforts to strengthen meaningful inclusion of children and youth in EU external action.
11. The Council remains deeply concerned by the shrinking space for civil society in an increasing number of countries. It reaffirms that EU support to civil society should feature more prominently in all partnerships and encourages efforts to ensure that a more strategic engagement with civil society is mainstreamed in all areas of cooperation.
12. The Council highlights that environmental degradation, climate change, extreme weather, and natural disasters can offset development gains and economic progress especially in poor countries. The Council welcomes EU efforts to tackle these issues, in line with the Paris Agreement, and calls for continued efforts to strengthen and increase climate co-benefits and efforts on climate change mitigation and adaptation in EU external actions.
13. The Council welcomes the implementation of the External Investment Plan (EIP) aimed at encouraging private investors to contribute to sustainable development and job creation in partner countries in Africa and the European Neighbourhood. The Council also highlights the efforts made in the area of Digitalisation for Development (D4D) and encourages the Commission to further operationalise the D4D approach. The Council recognises that better connectivity can also support countries to achieve sustainable development.
14. 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, while ensuring that people in less visible crises are not forgotten. The Council expresses concern about the continued global expansion of humanitarian needs, including in Europe's neighbourhood. It also stresses the need to continue the efforts to invest in famine prevention and to effectively address acute food crises such as those experienced in 2017 in Yemen, northeast Nigeria, Somalia and South-Sudan. The Council encourages further efforts to operationalise the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus and highlights the importance of working in line with the OECD-DAC recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus in order to effectively address situations of conflict and crisis.

15. The EU and its Member States reaffirm all their individual and collective ODA commitments.² 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. The Council also recalls that, in accordance with the new European Consensus on Development, while fully respecting individual Member States' priorities, the development cooperation of the EU and its Member States should be targeted where the need is greatest and where it can have most impact, especially in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and in situations of fragility and conflict.
16. Furthermore, the Council calls on the Commission to pay attention to the specific challenges of countries graduating from low-income status, to engage in development cooperation, policy dialogue and partnerships with Middle Income Countries (MICs) on sustainable development, poverty eradication, income inequalities, protracted refugee crises, and other shared interests and to develop innovative engagement with More Advanced Developing Countries (MADCs) including in and beyond financial cooperation.
17. The EU's Integrated Approach has facilitated more coherent and holistic engagement – spanning the diplomatic, security and defence, including CSDP missions and operations, development cooperation and humanitarian aid fields. The Council welcomes progress with regard to the strengthening of resilience, conflict prevention, crisis management and stabilisation abroad and the efforts on capacity building for security and development.
18. The EU also stresses the need to continue efforts to address the root causes of forced displacement and irregular migration. The Council encourages the Commission to further strengthen the ongoing implementation of the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) and The Facility for Refugees in Turkey.

² 8959/18 - Council conclusions on "Investing in Sustainable Development" and Annual Report 2018 to the European Council on EU Development Aid Targets

19. The Council recalls its conclusions on the Commission Staff Working Document "Revised EU International Cooperation and Development Results Framework"³, and welcomes the alignment of the revised EU Results Framework with indicators for the SDGs as well as with the new European Consensus on Development and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. It further welcomes the strengthening of the monitoring process in partner countries and the reporting on results of ongoing EU-interventions. Better data coverage and timely information are important for decision-making and mutual accountability as well as public awareness and visibility. It calls upon the Commission to further strengthen reporting on results in the Annual Report and to include specific results where appropriate. Furthermore, the Council encourages the Commission to further develop, in future Annual Reports, its reporting on joint implementation and the involvement of implementing partners, broken down by type of entity as referred to in the Financial Regulation.
20. The Council supports the EU in its efforts to communicate on development cooperation, for instance through the EU Development Communication Network. It calls on the Commission to use events such as the European Development Days to enhance people-centred engagement and to reinforce such initiatives as the Development Education and Awareness-Raising (DEAR) programme and the Policy Lab in External Relations. Particular attention should be given to youth and children in EU efforts to improve visibility, information and communication, both in and outside the Union.

³ 14553/18