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Environment

Brussels, 17 December 2020

President

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- ¹ • 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.

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ITEMS DEBATED

European climate law

The Council reached agreement on a general approach on the European climate law, including a new EU greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990, following the guidance of the [European Council](#) given on 10-11 December.

Watch the recording of the [public debate](#)

For more details, see the [press release](#)

[European Council](#) conclusions, 10-11 December 2020 ([press release, 11 December 2020](#))

European climate law: Council agrees its partial negotiating position ([press release, 23 October 2020](#))

[Amended proposal](#) by the European Commission

[Original proposal](#) by the European Commission

NDC submission of EU and its member states

The Council today adopted the submission on the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of the EU and its member states to the UNFCCC. The submission contains an updated and enhanced target of at least a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990, following the guidance of the [European Council](#) on 10-11 December 2020.

Watch the recording of the [public debate](#)

Paris Agreement: Council approves nationally determined contribution for EU and member states ([press release 17 December 2020](#))

Making the recovery from COVID-19 circular and green - Council conclusions

The Council approved conclusions on making the recovery from COVID-19 circular and green as a response to the European Commission's new Circular Economy Action Plan. The conclusions aim at providing comprehensive political guidance on the broad range of actions foreseen in the Action Plan. They aim to strike a balance between an ambitious approach and the need to consider a broad range of issues when implementing the various actions, including the different starting points of Member States.

Watch the recording of the [public debate](#)

Council adopts conclusions on making the recovery circular and green ([press release 17 December 2020](#))

Digitalisation for the benefit of the environment - Council Conclusions

The Council approved conclusions addressing the twin societal challenge of digital transformation and green transition, and exploring ways to contribute to building the necessary bridges between them.

The conclusions give political guidance to the Commission with a view to presenting appropriate initiatives to exploit the opportunities offered by digitalisation for environmental protection and climate action, and to limit the negative environmental impacts of digitalisation.

Watch the recording of the [public debate](#)

Digitalisation for the benefit of the environment: Council adopts conclusions ([press release 17 December 2020](#))

Aarhus Regulation on access to justice in environmental matters

The Council reached agreement on a general approach on a proposal to amend the Aarhus Regulation. The Aarhus Regulation sets out how the EU and its member states implement the international Aarhus Convention, which aims to guarantee access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters.

Watch the recording of the [public debate](#)

Council reaches agreement on improving access to justice in environmental matters ([press release 17 December 2020](#))

EU chemicals strategy for sustainability

Environment Ministers exchanged views on the Commission's newly presented chemicals strategy for sustainability - towards a toxic-free environment. The Commission adopted the strategy on 14 October 2020, as a key component of the European Green Deal.

Member States gave broad support to the strategy and considered the general level of ambition of the strategy to be appropriate. Delegations expressed their interest in further working on future proposals that are part of the strategy and remaining closely involved in its implementation.

Watch the recording of the [public debate](#)

Any other business

– ***Deforestation***

France provided information to delegations on the elimination of deforestation.

[Information from France](#)

– ***Commission proposal batteries and waste batteries***

The Commission presented its new proposal on batteries and waste batteries.

[Commission Proposal and Annexes](#)

– ***Multilateral environment Agreements***

The Commission informed Ministers on a call for urgent action regarding the ratification of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

Information from the Commission (13669/20)

– ***Antarctic Marine Living Resources***

Spain informed Ministers about the Report on the annual meeting of the Commission for the conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) (27-30 October 2020).

[Information from Spain](#)

– ***European Conference "Climate change and the European water dimension – Enhancing resilience"***

Portugal provided delegations with information on the European Conference "Climate change and the European water dimension – Enhancing resilience" (4-5 November 2020).

Information from Portugal (13664/20)

– *Portuguese Presidency Work programme*

Finally, the incoming Portuguese Presidency presented its work programme for the first half of 2021.

Watch the recording of the [morning session](#)

Watch the recording of the [public debate](#)

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

ENVIRONMENT

EU emissions trading system (EU ETS)

Council decides to extend the period for raising objections by two months to a Commission Delegated Regulation amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/1122 as regards the functioning of the Union Registry under Regulation (EU) 2018/841 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

The Union Registry serves to guarantee accurate accounting for all allowances issued under the EU emissions trading system (EU ETS).

Protection of wild pollinators in the EU

The Council adopted conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report 15/2020 entitled "Protection of wild pollinators in the EU: Commission initiatives have not borne fruit".

AGRICULTURE

Certain maximum residue levels II

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of the draft Commission Regulation as regards maximum residue levels for aclonifen, boscalid, cow milk, etofenprox, ferric pyrophosphate, L-cysteine, lambda-cyhalothrin, maleic hydrazide, mefentrifluconazole, sodium 5-nitroguaiacolate, sodium o-nitrophenolate, sodium p-nitrophenolate and triclopyr in or on certain products [13840/20](#), [13170/20](#) + [ADD1](#) + [ADD2](#).

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EXSPEC for the EUIX 2021

The Council approved the EU Military Committee agreed the draft Exercise Specifications (EXSPEC) for the EU Interoperability Exercise 2021 (EUIX 2021).

Restrictive measures against the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Council adopted an implementing decision and an implementing regulation concerning restrictive measures against the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which update the information relating to one person subject to restrictive measures, in line with the update made by the United Nations Security Council Committee established pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1533 (2004).

Council Decision in support of combating the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Member States of the League of Arab States

The Council adopted a decision amending Council decision (CFSP) 2018/1789 in support of combating the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Member States of the League of Arab States.

Restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine

The Council today decided to prolong the restrictive measures currently targeting specific sectors of the Russian economy until 31 July 2021. These sanctions were imposed in 2014 in response to Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine.

For more details, see the [press release](#)

Council Declaration on the common funding of the deployment of EU Battlegroups

The Council approved a declaration concerning transport costs for land, sea and air deployment of Battle Groups.

Restrictive measures against Belarus

In response to the brutality of the Belarusian authorities and in support of the democratic rights of the Belarusian people, the Council adopted 36 additional designations. These sanctions target high-level officials responsible for the ongoing violent repression and intimidation of peaceful demonstrators, opposition members and journalists, among others.

For more details, see the [press release](#)

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to documents

On 17 December 2020, the Council approved the reply to confirmatory application No 25/c/01/20 (doc. 13383/20).
