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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Recent wildfire that caused serious damage to the environment and the agricultural sector
- Information from the Cyprus delegation

Delegations will find in Annex a note from the Republic of Cyprus on the above subject, concerning an item under "Any other business" at the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 19 July 2021.

Information from the Republic of Cyprus on the recent wildfire that caused serious damage to the environment and the agricultural sector of the island

A week ago, Cyprus was confronted with the most devastating wildfire in its recent history. In the afternoon of Saturday July 3rd, a fire broke out in the mountain village of Arakapas, at the foot of the Troodos mountains. Due to the prevailing meteorological conditions, that is high winds and heat wave, the fire spread extremely fast, burning through forests and cultivated land. The fire was put under control only by the following Monday - July 5, due to the herculean efforts of our firefighting personnel.

The Fire Fighting Services, the Department of Forestry and the Civil Protection Department of the Republic of Cyprus along with volunteers, totalling 800 people, were mobilised to control the fire. Fire-fighting airplanes and helicopters worked continuously for more than 48 hours, supported by help from Israel, the UK and Greece through the rescEU mechanism.

The devastating wildfire killed four people and burnt through 55 square kilometres of forest, shrub and farmland, affecting a total of 9 villages and their infrastructure, including agricultural machinery and equipment. The most affected villages within the burned 55 square kilometres area were Arakapas, Vavatsinia, Agioi Vavatsinias, Ora, Odou, Melini, Eftagonia, Dierona and Sikopetra.

The exact extent of the damage in agriculture is still being estimated and remedial measures are progressively being taken. According to available information, annual and permanent crops such as tomatoes, vegetables and orchards, suffered the greatest losses. Severe damage has also been observed in field crops, greenhouses and livestock.

We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to the EU rescEU mechanism and all the Member States that reacted immediately to our call for help, as well as Greece, Israel and the UK who cooperated with our administration offering fire-fighting airplanes and helicopters.

The Republic of Cyprus, in order to provide assistance to the affected villages and ensure the viability of farming in the affected areas, requests financial assistance through the Solidarity Fund and other instruments of the EU, including possible activation of CAP support measures, to address the catastrophic situation as soon as possible.
