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Subject: A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action  
- Council conclusions (13 November 2017)

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Delegations will find in the Annex the Council conclusions on the strategic approach to resilience in the EU's external action, adopted by the Council at its 3574th meeting held on 13 November 2017.

**A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO RESILIENCE IN THE EU'S EXTERNAL ACTION****COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS**

1. The Council welcomes the strategic approach to resilience in the EU's external action set out in the Joint Communication from the High Representative and the Commission<sup>1</sup>. It invites the High Representative, the Commission and the Member States, to take work forward on the basis of its recommendations and the ten guiding considerations it identifies, and to integrate it across all relevant work strands. This work will form one of the major pillars of the implementation of the Global strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy.
2. The EU has committed itself to a transformational set of development, environmental, climate change, humanitarian, human rights, foreign and security policy goals. The EU's strategic approach to resilience aims to secure and sustain progress towards these goals, against the backdrop of a more connected, contested and complex world, while recognising the role of the EU external action in contributing to resilience within the Union as well as in its immediate neighbourhood and beyond. In doing so, working with EU partners, it aims to:
  - strengthen the preparedness and adaptive capacity of states, societies, communities and individuals to political, structural, socio-economic, environmental, climate-related, demographic, societal or security pressures and shocks;
  - support the capacity of partner countries and civil society facing significant internal or external pressures, to build, maintain or restore core public functions in full respect for democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, while fostering social and political cohesion and inclusive long-term security and stability and sustainable development;

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's external action. JOIN(2017) 21 final of 7.6.2017

- build upon the existing capacity of societies, communities and individuals to manage opportunities and risks in a peaceful and stable manner, and to maintain or restore livelihoods in the face of recurrent pressures and shocks.
3. Under its strategic approach to resilience, the EU will develop a more ambitious political, structural, long-term and context-specific approach to addressing vulnerabilities and underlying risks in its external environment, and to factors and dynamics of fragility. The EU and its Member States will foster a dynamic and multidimensional approach to resilience in line with commitments under the European Consensus on Development, while recognising that integrating resilience into national and local policies is primarily a responsibility of each country. , The EU will give greater weight to anticipating disruptive pressures and shocks, including by recognising the specific vulnerabilities of certain groups within societies, to preparedness and prevention. It will address the root causes of refugee flows, irregular migration and forced displacement, while developing better mechanisms to assess future flows and impact on countries of transit and origin. Greater flexibility will be built into EU programmes at country and regional level, which will need better to identify and build upon and strengthen local factors of resilience, and to engage at community level. This approach will reflect the commitment in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to "leave no one behind", and to build effective, inclusive and accountable institutions at all levels. It should also fully reflect the gender dimension and secure the rights and participation of women and girls.
  4. The EU will put greater emphasis on addressing needs resulting from protracted crises, and on breaking recurrent cycles of crisis, while promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law and compliance with international law. To this end, the Council will work with the High Representative and the Commission to ensure a more effective mobilisation of the political, diplomatic, conflict prevention, mediation and peace building capacity of the EU and its Member States, alongside development and humanitarian assistance, while respecting the distinct mandate and principles of humanitarian action.

5. EU external policy in all its aspects has a direct role to play in contributing to resilience within the borders of the EU, notably by improving detection and response to external crises affecting the interests of the Union and the security of its citizens. In this context, the Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to identify and reinforce linkages between EU external policy, including CSDP, and the European Agenda on Security in the safeguarding of the EU's values and interests. The EU will also continue to pursue its work on countering hybrid threats, cyber security, strategic communication, preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism, and enhancing the security of critical infrastructure. Strengthening resilience of EU partners in the immediate neighbourhood and beyond is of particular importance. The Council encourages the High Representative and the Commission to take forward the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy review, including its security dimension. The Council also recalls the importance of ensuring adequate financing, including the possibility in due course of a dedicated instrument with a flexible geographical scope, to support reform and capacity building of the security sector in partner countries, as stipulated in its conclusions of 18 May 2017 on security and defence in the context of the EU Global Strategy. While respecting the autonomy of the EU's decision-making process, the EU will also strengthen co-operation on resilience with UN system and NATO, as well as the OSCE and other relevant regional organisations, notably in Africa.
6. The Council recalls the importance of resilience in ongoing work on operationalising the humanitarian-development nexus, which should now be rolled out in line with the Council's Conclusions in May, starting from a number of pilot countries. It welcomes current work on the integrated approach to violent conflict and crises, which aims to strengthen the EU's efforts to prevent and resolve conflict and to foster sustainable peace, and will incorporate a strong resilience dimension.
7. In order to increase the impact of the EU's external action, the Council invites the High Representative, the Commission, and the Member States, to take forward work on the following four building blocks as set out in the Joint Communication:

- **improving the shared analysis of risk at country and regional level**, so as better to inform strategy, political dialogue, programming of development support, and delivery of humanitarian assistance. This should include streamlining current assessment processes, with the aim of creating a single, succinct country assessment that integrates in a more systematic and dynamic way information from the EU's diplomatic network, Member States, CSDP missions and operations, specialised agencies and other services and, where appropriate, humanitarian and development actors, with due regard to their respective mandates;
- **more dynamic monitoring of external pressures** that could present a risk of derailing in a significant way a partner country's development process or security, or that could have significant consequences for the resilience of the Union. This should be designed to ensure that early warning signs are translated into early preventive action, and a more effective EU political and operational response. Plans for a three-to-six month horizon scanning should be further developed in this regard. The EU's Conflict Early Warning System should be further developed in order to integrate appropriate indicators of resilience;
- **integrating the resilience approach into current EU programming** as far as possible and appropriate under the existing instruments, **and into reflections on the future financing of EU external action**;
- **developing international policy and practice on resilience**, through political dialogue, sectoral policy dialogue and external investment policy, as well as by engaging with civil society and other development actors at all levels. Closer cooperation and sharing of best practice should be developed with multilateral partners, including the UN system, World Bank, OECD, EBRD, regional and sub-regional organisations.

8. The Council will monitor and assess progress of the elements of these conclusions, and revert to the issue as appropriate.

**Ten guiding considerations for a strategic approach to resilience**

The following guiding considerations for an effective and strategic approach to resilience can be identified:

1. **Strengthening resilience is a means not an end.** The EU's strategic approach to resilience is about building upon underlying institutional and societal strengths in partner countries in order to achieve long term sustainable development or security goals. It is about securing progress towards these goals by addressing vulnerabilities and underlying structural risks. It recognises that development, and progress towards democracy, peace and security, is not a linear process, and that sectoral approaches, on their own, are not always enough to ensure sustainable results.
2. **Understanding the factors of resilience in a given context can help us plan against pressures and contingencies in a more effective manner.** To do so requires a proper understanding of the linkages between different parts of the complex systems that govern and sustain states, societies and communities, as well as of how they respond when faced with sudden-onset shocks, recurrent or long-term stresses.
3. **Resilience is context-specific, and requires tailor-made approaches.** Although there are a number of common characteristics of resilient systems, it will be for practitioners and local actors to develop context-specific working definitions. The role of the EU and other external actors is to support this process and to foster societies better empowered to identify and solve their own problems. It requires policy makers and development partners to adopt a long-term approach that tolerates the necessary adaptability as approaches are tested and refined.

4. **Identifying and building upon existing positive sources of resilience is as important as tracking and responding to vulnerabilities.** Such factors may take the form of institutionalised or informal democratic and good governance or justice systems, non-state institutions and organisations, embedded cultural norms and practices or ad hoc community-driven solutions that complement state capacities or compensate for their absence. **Resilience has to be addressed at multiple levels – state, society and community.** Local governments and civil society are often the basis on which resilience can take root and grow at community level. Women have a specific and essential role that needs to be recognised and acted upon, while addressing the structural causes of gender inequality.
5. **Resilience is about transformation not preserving the status quo.** If resilience is about sustaining the core identity and capabilities of states, societies and communities in the face of disruptive pressures, it is also about ensuring their ability to adapt and reform to meet new needs. Harnessing the transformative dimension of resilience is key.
6. **Resilience requires a political approach.** Governments have primary responsibility for catering for the needs of their populations, and international assistance should not be a substitute for local responsibility and political action. All countries have committed to the Sustainable Development Goals, which include specific references to strengthening resilience. Thus the primary responsibility for integrating resilience into national and local policy frameworks lies within each country. However, the EU and its Member States can support the strengthening of resilience through raising the issue as an integral part of its political dialogue, including at the highest level.
7. **Resilience requires risk-informed programming.** Action to address the underlying diverse causes of fragility should be accompanied with risk management measures to protect populations from shocks and stresses, limit their impact through early response and assist a quick recovery.

8. It will not always be possible to address sustained pressures at their point of origin, or to escape the consequences of a sudden-onset crisis. But addressing problems at the point of failure is disproportionately costly. That means **building flexibility and adaptability to change into programme design from the outset**. It also means thinking about the possible stresses that strengthening or weakening one part of a system can place on another.
9. **Early warning needs to be linked to early action.** It is not possible to avoid all risks, so an effective resilience approach requires decision makers to be able to identify and assess pressures in the long, medium and short term, and to take effective early action. This means that a complete assessment has to be linked to appropriate decision-making processes. This is not just about shocks (as in the case of natural disaster, inter-state conflict or economic crisis), it is also about slow-onset crises, recurrent pressures, or cumulative long-term pressures that can reach a tipping point (demographic, environmental degradation, climate change, migratory and other chronic stresses).
10. **The operational starting point is a broader analysis of strengths, vulnerabilities and pressures.** States and societies are built around complex interdependencies between political and security actors, the private sector, civil society, communities and individuals. Traditional sectoral policy approaches may not identify all vulnerabilities, their interconnections, or anticipate how a system as a whole will respond when it comes under pressure, including possible consequences for other States. That means that for any given outcome, risk – and the ability to cope – needs to be analysed at multiple levels, particularly at the points at which one factor of resilience, or one set of actors is dependent on the resilience of others, or where power relations between different levels of society play an important role. Typically this will mean an "all-hazard" approach, bringing together analysis at regional, state, organisational, community and individual level.

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