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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Council Conclusions on the EU Approach to Resilience

At its meeting on 27-28 May 2013, the Council adopted the Council Conclusions set out in the Annex to this note.

Council Conclusions on the EU Approach to Resilience

Introduction

1. The Council recognises that, in many contexts, high levels of vulnerability aggravate the chronic effects of poverty and that poverty itself increases vulnerability. In recent years the frequency and severity of natural and man-made disasters, including conflict-related, has increased, affecting in particular the poor. This trend is likely to continue given the impacts of climate change and other factors that exacerbate poverty, fragility and vulnerability.
2. In this context, resilience is understood to mean the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to prepare for, to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks without compromising long-term development prospects. The new approach to building resilience provides an opportunity to bring together political dialogue, humanitarian and development work and priorities in a comprehensive, coherent and effective approach to achieve better results on the ground. Building resilience not only reduces suffering and loss of life but is also more cost effective.
3. Against this backdrop, the Council welcomes the Commission's Communication on the 'EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from Food Security Crises'¹, which focuses on issues relating to food security and makes proposals for how the EU and its Member States together can systematically make a contribution to tackle chronic vulnerability and risk in a more effective, efficient and coordinated way. While recognising the importance of a focus on food insecurity crises, the Communication also emphasises other determinants of vulnerability, including conflict, insecurity, weak democratic governance, economic shocks, natural hazards and the increasing impact of climate change.

¹ Doc. 14616/12.

4. This Communication has a strong inter-relationship with previous Communications and Council Conclusions, notably those on the *Agenda for Change*². Given the horizontal and overarching nature of resilience, the Council underlines the importance of ensuring clear linkages with related existing and upcoming policy documents, frameworks and activities³, including relevant Action Plans.

EU Approach to Resilience

5. The EU's resilience approach recognises the need to address the root causes of crises, especially recurrent crises, chronic poverty and vulnerability and to take a long-term perspective which is firmly embedded in local and national policies and linked to complementary action at regional level. The approach incorporates a number of key components including: the need to anticipate crises by assessing risks; a greater focus on risk reduction, prevention, mitigation and preparedness; and further efforts to enhance swift response to and recovery from crises.

² Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change – Commission Communication COM(2011) 637 final (doc. 15560/11), Council Conclusions (doc. 9369/12).

³ Relevant documents include the European Consensus on Development (2006/C 46/01) and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008/C 25/01); Council Conclusions on Rio + 20: Outcome and follow-up to the UNCSD 2012 Summit (doc. 15477/12), Humanitarian Food Assistance (doc. 9654/10), Climate Change and Development (doc. 16071/09) and EU Climate Diplomacy (doc. 12970/11), the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 13/2012: "European Union Development Assistance for Drinking-Water Supply and Basic Sanitation in Sub-Saharan Countries" (doc. 17288/12), Social Protection in European Union Development Cooperation (doc. 14538/12), the EU Strategy for Supporting Disaster Risk Reduction in Developing Countries (doc. 9920/09), Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (doc. 9989/01), An EU response to situations of fragility (doc. 15118/07), The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations (doc. 5873/13), Communication on Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes (doc. 9806/13), EU Support for Sustainable Change in Transition Societies (doc. 5873/13); and the Commission Communication Enhancing Maternal and Child Nutrition in External Assistance: an EU Policy Framework (doc. 7521/13).

6. The EU approach to resilience is aimed at addressing both natural and man-made disasters, including slow- or rapid-onset disasters, large-scale emergencies and localised but frequent stresses and shocks, as well as crises in fragile or conflict-affected States. It also recognises that these different contexts require a differentiated and targeted approach.
7. Together with its partner countries, the EU has already contributed to efforts to build the resilience of vulnerable populations, in particular through SHARE (Supporting Horn of Africa Resilience) as well as from the initial lessons emerging from AGIR (Alliance Globale pour l'Initiative Résilience) in the Sahel. Together with experiences in other regions, including in conflict-related crises, these initiatives and successful projects on disaster risk reduction can serve as examples for lesson learning, potential replication and the scale-up of good practice across other countries and regions.
8. Based on the experience to date, the Council maintains that the EU approach to resilience in partner countries should be guided by the following key principles:
 - a. Recognise that it is primarily the national government's responsibility to build resilience and to define political, economic, environmental and social priorities accordingly;
 - b. Develop jointly and on an ongoing basis, well informed, context specific analysis, built on a shared understanding between humanitarian and development actors and between the EU and its Member States. This should incorporate a common appreciation of the specificity of political and policy contexts and awareness of particular risks and vulnerabilities, enabling a shared definition of strategic priorities and coordinated multi-sectoral development programming;

- c. Take a medium to long-term perspective when planning humanitarian action and development programming which recognises that risk reduction, prevention, mitigation and preparedness play essential roles in building resilience and that genuinely sustainable development must focus on the real risks facing local communities and tackle the root causes of frequent crises in order to prevent their recurrence;
- d. Acknowledge the need to carry out this agenda in close cooperation with other bilateral development partners and multilateral actors, notably the United Nations system given the latter's central and coordinating role in promoting a coherent international response to humanitarian crises;
- e. Pursue conflict-sensitive approaches across humanitarian, development and political dialogue and engagement, in particular when working to improve resilience in fragile or conflict-affected States, taking into account the wider root causes of chronic insecurity and the impact of these factors on the vulnerability of populations;
- f. Recognise the complementary roles of development cooperation, humanitarian action and political dialogue and engagement as essential components of building resilience and ensure that efforts to link relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) remain integral to such activities;
- g. Invest in capacity strengthening across all relevant sectors and ensure that analysis and solutions are rooted in local ownership and the experience of affected communities, countries and regions. Stress the importance of working closely with local communities, civil society, local authorities, research institutions and the private sector in devising and implementing policy responses, while retaining state-building and international co-operation as central elements of the resilience framework. Developing the capacity of regional organisations to building resilience will be a key component of this approach, as will the need to promote lessons learning and experience sharing from within the EU;

- h. Reiterate the EU's commitment to build long-term resilience in partner countries through inclusive and sustainable economic growth for human development, with a view to helping vulnerable population groups and those most at risk to participate in, and benefit from, wealth and job creation;
- i. Ensure a gender- and child-sensitive approach, recognising the distinct rights, needs, capacities and coping mechanisms of women, girls, boys and men. Recognise the crucial role of women in building resilience in households, communities and countries affected by crises, bearing in mind the importance of efforts to promote the economic empowerment of women, women's access to and control over resources and services, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, as set out in the ICPD Cairo Agenda, and the need to combat gender based violence;
- j. Within the regions and countries most in need, focus on the most vulnerable households and marginalised groups through a comprehensive rights-based approach taking into account the needs of these groups and facilitating their access to basic social services, with a particular focus on the nutrition, health and education needs of children;
- k. Support lasting solutions for internally displaced people and refugee populations, in recognition of the need to increase the resilience of these vulnerable groups and host communities;
- l. Promote accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness, including through the development of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks and related measurement tools. A resilience approach should be assessed in terms of measurable improvements at all levels, beginning at community level. This requires investment in the development of results-based management approaches, with strong baseline data. Measurement of intermediate progress towards the delivery of these results is also relevant, in particular in situations of fragility.

9. The Council emphasises the need to take a holistic view and adopt a comprehensive and coherent approach, in particular in fragile or conflict-affected States, whilst at the same time safeguarding the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Drawing on existing policies, including the *Agenda for Change*, the EU should make full and effective use of the tools and instruments available to it in order to build resilience.

Implementation priorities

10. In order to ensure a prompt and focused start to implementation, the Council underlines the need to address the following areas as priorities:
 - a. The Council endorses the approach recommended in the Communication to promote resilience-building throughout the programming and project management cycle, particularly in disaster-prone and conflict-affected countries. The Resilience Action Plan foreseen in the Communication should support the implementation of this integrated approach, with clear geographic and thematic implementation priorities and targets. The Council encourages Member States to reflect on support for the priorities as set out in the Action Plan;
 - b. The Council underlines the importance of a joint, inclusive, flexible and multi-sectoral approach to programme design, with disaster resilience embedded into programming. In countries facing recurrent crises, the EU and its Member States will work with partner governments, other donors, regional and international organisations and other stakeholders, including local communities and authorities, local and international civil society organisations, to strengthen national and local ownership and to develop and support existing platforms to enable joint analysis and action;

- c. The Council notes that such analysis should usefully inform the development of coherent EU strategies, timely exchange of information, and effective coordination of short, medium and long-term actions to strengthen resilience-building. In this context, the EU will complete its guidance on how to link humanitarian and development interventions at country level and will operationalise this through headquarters and field structures in close cooperation with Member States and other donors;
- d. For countries facing recurrent crises, the EU and its Member States will work to make humanitarian and development funding more timely, predictable, flexible multi-annual and sufficient. In this context, the EU and its Member States will examine ways in which to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian and development funding modalities. The use of innovative financing mechanisms will also be encouraged;
- e. The EU and its Member States will promote new and innovative approaches, including the development of social protection mechanisms such as social safety nets and enhanced work in the field of risk management related to the fields of insurance and re-insurance;
- f. The Council acknowledges the importance of assisting vulnerable and disaster-prone countries and regions in developing effective early-warning information systems and disaster management and risk reduction strategies, including through the promotion of modern technologies and platforms;
- g. The EU and its Member States will promote dialogue on resilience in the partnerships with third countries and in international fora and processes, such as the UN, G8, G20, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the Rio Conventions, the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction, the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) and other processes related to the implementation of the New Deal for engagement in fragile states, the development of a post-2015 agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals and the follow-up to the Hyogo Framework for Action of 2005-2015.

11. The Council invites the Commission and the EEAS to engage with the Member States to review progress made on the resilience agenda at regular intervals, looking in particular at the policy, programming, mobilisation and use of funding, implementation modalities and results. Reviews should be organised to assess progress and adapt the Resilience Action Plan where necessary.

12. The Council looks forward to the delivery of a first progress review during 2014.
