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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Council

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Subject: Draft Council conclusions on the 8th Environmental Action Programme -
The way forward to a green and just transition for a sustainable Europe
- Approval

1. On 6 April 2022, the European Parliament and the Council adopted Decision (EU) 2022/591¹ which sets out the 8th Environment Action Programme ('8th EAP'). It establishes a framework for action on environment and climate policy until 2030 with six thematic priority objectives for 2030 and a long-term 2050 priority objective of living well, within planetary boundaries. It also identifies the enabling conditions for all sectors to meet these objectives in a coherent manner.

¹ Decision (EU) 2022/591 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 April 2022 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030; OJ L 114, 12.4.2022, p. 22–36

2. In accordance with Article 5(1) of Decision (EU) 2022/591, the Commission shall, by 31 March 2024, carry out a mid-term review of the progress achieved and submit a report on the mid-term review to the European Parliament and to the Council. That report was issued on 13 March 2024 and presented to the Working Party on the Environment ('WPE') on 20 March 2024.
3. In response to the above report, the Presidency decided to propose draft Council conclusions, entitled 'The 8th Environment Action Programme Mid-term review – The way forward to a green, just and inclusive transition for a sustainable Europe.' The WPE discussed the first draft and subsequent revised versions² of the Council conclusions at its meetings on 9 and 22 April and 7 and 24 May 2024.
4. The draft conclusions resulting from the above discussions were examined by the Committee of Permanent Representatives on 5 June 2024³. The Committee discussed several changes which are now reflected in the Annex to this note.
5. In this context, the Council is invited to consider the draft conclusions, as set out in the Annex to this note, with a view to their approval at its session on 17 June 2024.

² 8366/24 + REV 1-3

³ 10432/24.

**The 8th Environment Action Programme Mid-term review – The way forward to a green,
just and inclusive transition for a sustainable Europe**

- draft Council conclusions -

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. HIGHLIGHTS the key role of the EU Environment Action Programmes in ensuring ambitious environmental and climate action legislation; RECALLS the decision (EU) 2022/591 of the European Parliament and of the Council regarding a General Union Environment Action Programme (8th EAP) and its long-term priority objective “that by 2050 at the latest, people live well, within the planetary boundaries, in a well-being economy where nothing is wasted, growth is regenerative, climate neutrality in the Union has been achieved and inequalities have been significantly reduced”; STRESSES the commitment and need to continue Environment Action Programmes beyond 2030 in order to contribute, inter alia, to competitive sustainability across the EU’s economy and industry and to ensure a just and inclusive transition within planetary boundaries;
2. STRESSES the importance of urgent action to tackle the cumulative negative effects of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution given the devastating impacts and growing intensity and frequency of climate-related events for ecosystems and their services, health, economies, social justice, human rights and cohesion; EMPHASIZES in particular the need to change unsustainable production and consumption patterns, reinforce climate adaptation and resilience, strengthen a toxic-free circular economy and sustainable resource management and ensure a green, just and inclusive transition as well as the need to reverse the negative trends affecting ecosystems; EMPHASIZES that the research shows the EU and the world have already transgressed several planetary boundaries;

3. RECALLS that the EU and its Member States remain firmly committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as the collective plan of action to put sustainability, human rights and gender equality, at the centre of policy actions at EU level, leaving no one behind;
4. ACKNOWLEDGES that a green, just and inclusive transition presents an opportunity to improve people's health, strengthen European economic resilience and competitiveness, protect, restore and promote sustainable use of natural resources, create high-quality green jobs, tackle economic and social inequalities and strengthen democracy, security and the EU's strategic autonomy while preserving an open economy and ensure peace; RECALLS the Council Conclusions on EU Green Diplomacy adopted in March 2024 and in particular their resolute condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, source of massive damages to the environment, risks for nuclear safety and energy and food security; UNDERLINES that it also requires synergies between environmental, social and economic objectives, including by integrating the One Health approach in all sectoral policies, enabling structural discussions on policy coherence and cross-cutting issues, within and between institutions including at regional and local level, taking into account the plurality of national governance frameworks and avoiding unnecessary administrative burden; RECOGNISES the unique situation of island regions and the Union's Outermost regions, both in terms of natural resources, biodiversity and the specific environmental challenges they face;

5. RECOGNISES the contribution of the European Green Deal (EGD) as an integrated growth strategy for a sustainable Europe leading to the adoption of key legislative initiatives such as the Fit for 55 package, [Placeholder: the Nature Restoration law], the Sustainable Products policy legislative package, including the Ecodesign for sustainable products Regulation (ESPR), the Sustainable Finance package; AGREES that such legislative initiatives enable the EU and its Member States to progress towards achieving the long-term objective of the EAP; ACKNOWLEDGES the added value of strategies such as the 2021 EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the New EU Forest Strategy for 2030, the Farm to Fork Strategy, the EU Soil Strategy 2030, and the Sustainable Chemicals Strategy, as well as of action plans such as the Circular Economy Action Plan and the Zero Pollution Action Plan and the launch of key mechanisms such as the Just Transition Mechanism;
6. WELCOMES the leading role of the EU on the international stage and the results achieved within multilateral environmental fora such as in the context of the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata Conventions, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), the Paris Agreement, the Glasgow Pact, the Global Framework on Chemicals, the UAE consensus and the UNEA 5 and 6 achievements, including the Resolution on Highly Hazardous Pesticides, and NOTES the World Health Assembly resolution on the impact of chemicals, waste and pollution on human health;

7. UNDERLINES the key positive role of agriculture, including in ensuring food security for EU citizens, and in reaching climate neutrality in the EU by 2050 at the latest; CALLS ON the Commission to take into account the results of the strategic dialogue and the ongoing discussion in the Council on the future of EU agriculture in order to successfully achieve the transition towards sustainable food systems adapted to climate change, which guarantee decent working conditions and a fair income for farmers, thriving rural areas, the competitiveness and resilience of European agriculture and the EU's strategic autonomy while preserving an open economy, as well as a high level of health and environmental performance, including with regard to biodiversity and nature protection, conservation and restoration, taking into consideration the socio-economic impacts of the transition;
8. TAKES NOTE OF the 2023 Monitoring report on progress towards the 8th EAP objectives of the European Environment Agency pointing to the urgent need to strengthen the implementation of existing legislation and fulfilling enabling conditions, bringing forward additional policies and measures when necessary and mainstreaming environment and climate change related policies into other policy areas;
9. WELCOMES the Mid-term review of the 8th EAP; UNDERLINES that implementation of the legislative initiatives adopted under the EGD will be crucial to reach the 8th EAP's priority objectives; REQUESTS the Commission, based on Article 5(2) of the decision (UE) 2022/591, to present a legislative proposal to add an annex to the 8th EAP with actions for the period post-2025 to maintain its continuity and ambition, taking these conclusions and the results of its Mid-term review into account; CALLS ON the Commission to consider actions supporting Member States in the implementation of legislation; SUGGESTS that Member States hold an annual high-level political dialogue at ministerial level to take stock of the progress towards the 8th EAP objectives;

10. TAKES NOTE OF recent communications from the Commission such as the communications ‘Securing our future Europe's 2040 climate target and path to climate neutrality by 2050 building a sustainable, just and prosperous society’, “Managing climate risks - protecting people and prosperity”, and “Towards an ambitious Industrial Carbon Management for the EU”, and of recent reports, at both EU as well as Global levels, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special edition: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet, the Global Resources Outlook 2024 of the International Resource Panel and the reports of the European Environment Agency (EEA) “Accelerating the circular economy in Europe - State and Outlook 2024” and on the European Climate Risk Assessment;
11. WELCOMES the presentation of the Letta report “Much More Than A Market” and; TAKES NOTE of its message that the green, fair and digital transition is crucial to delivering a sustainable and prosperous future, including the need to develop a Circular Single Market in order to create a future proof economy, as this will support environmental sustainability, while simultaneously driving economic growth; RECALLS the European Council conclusions of April 2024, which confirm the EU’s commitment to a sustainable and inclusive growth throughout Europe; HIGHLIGHTS the need for an integrated approach to green diplomacy, trade and cooperation with partner countries and on the multilateral stage to raise and promote convergence in environmental standards worldwide while working towards a global and green, just and inclusive transition; POINTS OUT that the competitive sustainability of European industry and creating a level playing field for all companies, incentivising them to pursue high environmental and social standards will be crucial in this regard

Climate change mitigation

12. RECOGNISES the interlinkages between climate mitigation action and climate risk management, and hence the importance of rapid climate mitigation action, as there are physical limits to society's capacity to adapt to increasingly severe climate risks;
13. RECALLS the important benefits of climate action on the EU's energy independence, reduced reliance on fossil fuel, including on Russian fossil fuels as soon as possible, reduced costs and exposure to future shocks, alongside co-benefits such as reduced impact of air and other types of pollution, on human health and ecosystems and their services; EMPHASISES that ensuring security and wellbeing of EU citizens is dependent on securing investments in effective climate action, in terms of decarbonising our economy, strengthening nature based solutions and enhancing resilience to climate risks;
14. NOTES the importance of fully meeting the EU's 2030 net greenhouse gas reduction target as a stepping stone towards climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest and aiming to achieve negative emissions thereafter, for implementing the EU's commitment under the Paris Agreement and providing an example to level the playing field; in this regard, HIGHLIGHTS the importance of a swift and full implementation of the Fit for 55 package, bearing in mind that this brings opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed; CALLS ON the Commission to work with Member States in the context of the updated NECPS to provide investment certainty;

15. EMPHASISES the importance of a stable and predictable policy framework to provide clarity for investors, including businesses, citizens as well as policymakers, and the need for a decision on an intermediate 2040 target in due time, in accordance with the European Climate law and the commitments under the Paris Agreement, and in line with the 1.5 degrees temperature goal, taking into account the outcomes of the global stocktake; ENCOURAGES the future Council Presidencies to pursue the discussions on these matters on an ongoing basis in order to ensure the submission of the EU's next NDC well ahead of COP30; RECALLS the need for all economic sectors to contribute to the green transition and RECOGNISES the transition will require the necessary enabling conditions, including an inclusive just transition, a competitive industry and agricultural sector and a level playing field with international partners; CALLS on the Commission and Member States to develop the necessary enabling framework, through well targeted use of EU and national measures; UNDERLINES the need to provide better incentives to scale up land-based and industrial carbon removals in order to meet the EU's climate targets;

Risk preparedness and climate resilience

16. WELCOMES the Commission's Communication "Managing climate risks - protecting people and prosperity" and the EEA's report on European Climate Risk Assessment (EUCRA); NOTES WITH CONCERN that many of the risks identified have reached critical levels and could become catastrophic unless urgent and decisive action is taken;
17. CALLS ON the Commission to follow up on its Communication with a systemic policy response in all relevant policy fields ensuring more effective and proactive action on climate risk management, including by strengthening existing legislation where appropriate;

18. CALLS ON the Commission to continue regular EU-wide climate risk assessments, also taking into account specific national circumstances;
19. INVITES the Commission, together with Member States, to develop efficient tools to monitor progress towards risk preparedness at the EU and national levels, focusing on outcomes rather than outputs;
20. LOOKS FORWARD to the Final Report of the Climate Resilience Dialogue; CALLS ON the Commission and Member States to further develop and implement solutions to narrow the climate protection gap, taking into account the need to incentivise preventive adaptation measures;
21. EMPHASISES the need for continued efforts to scale up international cooperation and finance to enhance climate resilience and risk preparedness in the most vulnerable developing countries, including enhancing access to finance; CALLS FOR a systemic and coherent EU approach at the international level to tackle climate change, pollution, deforestation, land degradation, land-take and biodiversity loss, especially through scaling up implementation of nature-based solutions;
22. EMPHASISES the important regulating role of water cycles for ecosystems, human life and the functioning of the economy and our society; RECOGNISES the impact of climate change on water availability -and security; CALLS FOR an initiative on water resilience, including the alignment and revision of relevant EU policies to better integrate water considerations, conservation objectives and the experiences of Member States where necessary to ensure a comprehensive, bottom-up approach focusing on achieving availability and security of water supply through the application of nature-based solutions such as conservation and restoration of wetlands and other freshwater ecosystems and the development, where required, of non-conventional water resources, and expansion of green-blue infrastructure, and mainstreaming a ‘water and soil driven’ approach into spatial planning;

23. ACKNOWLEDGES the strong links between healthy ecosystems, biodiversity and nature's ability to capture and safely store carbon and their vital role -in climate change mitigation and adaptation;

Circular Economy and sustainable resource management

24. ACKNOWLEDGES that unsustainable resource use drives the triple planetary crisis; RECOGNIZES circular economy and sustainable resource management as determining tools in that regard; UNDERLINES that the transition to a circular economy, for both finite and renewable materials, will serve as a tool to lower pressure on climate, natural resources and ecosystems, with the additional benefit of being an economic and industrial accelerator for Europe, driving systemic and sustainable innovation and employment while increasing the EU's self-sufficiency in critical raw materials;
25. ACKNOWLEDGES that the EU's material and consumption footprints are still far beyond what is sustainable within the planetary boundaries and that progress on circular material use is too slow to achieve the objectives of the 8th EAP; therefore UNDERLINES the need to decouple growth from resource use and its impacts by stimulating technologies and business models that make it possible to reduce resource demand at production and consumption levels and RECALLS the commitment in the 8th EAP to significantly decrease the Union's material and consumption footprints so as to bring them into planetary boundaries as soon as possible, including through the introduction of EU reduction targets, as appropriate, while tackling underlying systemic factors supporting the linear economy; UNDERLINES the need to promote a sustainable and circular bio-economy and nature-based solutions;

26. NOTES that EU sustainable product initiatives have been supporting the transition towards a circular economy, but will not be enough to reduce high consumption footprints, due to unsustainable consumption levels; therefore UNDERLINES that these issues should be addressed;
27. HIGHLIGHTS the need to take further steps in the short term at all levels to ensure an ambitious and swift implementation of adopted legislation, in particular the ESPR, as well as to reinforce the most effective existing policy instruments; in this context CALLS FOR the effective development of upcoming secondary legislation, for the presentation of a first workplan of the ESPR in the first months of 2025, and the swift roll-out of Ecodesign-requirements for specific product groups, as well as technical support to Member States, taking into account national specificities, and to companies to facilitate this implementation; INVITES the Commission to establish a new EU Strategic Plan for Circular Economy as soon as possible, INVITES the Commission and, where relevant, Member States, to take the following actions, focusing in particular on the most resource-intensive systems:
- a. to discuss measures on waste prevention and integrate circular economy into these in order to facilitate transition towards circular economy as well as effective, swift and coherent implementation, evaluation and reporting on the progress made to significantly decrease national material and consumption footprints;
 - b. to provide guidelines and additional mechanisms aimed at enhancing uniform market surveillance including actions targeting online sales;
 - c. to explore the possibilities to expand producer responsibility schemes towards more products and incorporate minimum requirements compatible with existing frameworks, leading to waste prevention, reuse and a longer lifetime of products;

- d. to ensure the efficient functioning of a high quality secondary raw material market, removing financial and administrative barriers hindering its development and focusing on investment and innovation in recycling processes and on establishing non-toxic material cycles including by evaluating and if appropriate proposing instruments, such as economic instruments, requirements for recycled content, and reducing the use of fossil fuels in the chemical sector in a sustainable way, inter alia, by reflecting on the use of sustainable carbon and fully delivering on the Chemicals Strategy, where revising the REACH plays an important role;
- e. to scale up circular production and consumption models that reduce overall resource use based on dematerialised provisioning systems, such as models based on product as a service, sharing products or repair;
- f. to ensure effective stakeholder involvement to, among other things, increase the exchange of good practices, support the development of a network of circular hubs at all levels and propose measures to strengthen European cross-sectoral scientific research on resource use;
- g. to evaluate the integration of circular economy into upcoming climate policies, supporting the EU target of climate neutrality by 2050;
- h. to strengthen the EU's strategic positioning on circular economy and resource management at global level, while working to increase international recognition of the role of resource use in meeting sustainability goals, to embed sustainable resource use in multilateral environmental agreements, to develop global governance structures, in that regard to consider working towards an international agreement on natural resources management, and to promote mutual learning and exchanges with partner countries globally, notably through the newly announced EU Circular Economy Resource Centre;

28. CALLS FOR a strong coordinated action at all levels and for policy coherence and mainstreaming of circular economy into other EU policies and fields; UNDERLINES the importance of setting out an ambitious long-term vision for the EU beyond 2030; in this context, URGES the Commission, together with the Member States and relevant stakeholders, to launch a comprehensive and effective process leading towards an integrated EU long-term vision for the transition to a circular economy and sustainable resource use, aimed at enabling systemic change to achieve a green, just and inclusive transition; INVITES the Commission in the context of such a process, to assess:
- a. the modalities for a governance framework to support such an integrated EU long-term vision;
 - b. the establishment of an EU long-term objective for sustainable resource use;
 - c. based on the evolution of current and where necessary future indicators of the EU Circular Economy Monitoring Framework, the setting of ambitious and economically feasible science-based targets to keep material and consumption footprints within the planetary boundaries and their translation to the national level taking into account specific conditions in Member States;
 - d. the establishment of an overarching legal framework, setting the level of ambition and proper policy instruments, enhancing policy coherence and mainstreaming and allowing for an effective implementation, and whether a comprehensive revision of existing legislation could be fit for this purpose, or a new legislative act is needed;

Zero pollution for a toxic free environment

29. RECALLS the Council conclusions on “Sustainable Chemicals Strategy of the Union: Time to Deliver”; STRESSES that the Commission has not fully delivered on the Chemicals Strategy, notably the revision of the REACH regulation, including the registration of polymers under REACH, the generic approach to risk management for the most harmful substances, addressing emerging chemical risks and emerging health and environmental concerns and prohibiting the production for export of harmful chemicals not allowed in the EU; therefore URGES the Commission to keep a high level of ambition in the implementation of the strategy;
30. EMPHASISES the key role of the chemicals industry in advancing the green and digital twin transitions, as well as the EU’s strategic autonomy while preserving an open economy; URGES the Commission to pursue efforts towards a sustainable, competitive and resilient EU Industry, as well as towards a toxic-free environment;
31. RECALLS that the persistent nature of Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) requires priority attention and action and therefore UNDERLINES the need to phase-out PFAS in line with the chemicals strategy for sustainability and in a well-managed process, as soon as possible while respecting the scientific findings of the risk assessment process and, where appropriate, the transition time needed to develop safe and sustainable alternatives; RECOGNISES that the proposal for a restriction of PFASs aims to meet this objective; CALLS UPON THE ECHA and the Commission to finalise the assessments of risk and socioeconomic aspects and to present a proposal for a decision to the Member States as soon as possible; CALLS ON the Commission to regularly inform the Council on the progress of the phasing-out of PFAS and on the PFAS Action Plan;

32. STRESSES the necessity of sound testing methods to identify possible negative impacts of exposure to chemical substances and establish legislation to guarantee safe use of chemicals on several types of toxicological characteristics, while avoiding the use of animal testing as much as possible; ENCOURAGES the development of testing guidelines, cooperation and exchange of information between all actors to promote reproducibility and transferability of results; INVITES the Commission to develop a European Test Method and Validation Strategy; INVITES the Commission and the Member States to address any possible backlog in pre-validation efforts for existing testing methods and to incentivise adequate funding;
33. RECOGNIZES the important pressure of nutrients and pesticides with adverse effects on the environment especially on waters, climate, biodiversity and human health; REGRETS the lack of Integrated Nutrient Management Action Plans, hampering improvement of water quality; CALLS FOR a stakeholder dialogue on the Nitrates Directive enabling Member States to improve water quality; CALLS ON the Commission and Member States to keep the pressure posed by the risk from the use of pesticides on the environment and public health as a priority area for action, in a strengthened constructive dialogue with stakeholders and farmers, highlighting the importance of implementing good practices such as Integrated Pest Management, for the sustainable use of pesticides while taking local conditions and food security into account;
34. RECOGNIZES the overarching importance of healthy soils in provisioning and regulating ecosystem services, which are essential to biodiversity, food safety and security, resource use for a sustainable bioeconomy, and the need to pursue a zero-pollution objective and tackle extreme weather events; CALLS ON Member States to keep and improve soil health, avoid and mitigate the impacts of soil sealing and soil destruction as a priority;

35. INVITES the Commission to build on the monitoring data to support scientific understanding of the effects of air pollutants and achieving the objective of avoiding, preventing or reducing their harmful effects on human health and the environment and, where substantial new scientific findings point to the need for it, assess whether applicable air quality standards are still appropriate;
36. ACKNOWLEDGES that legislations dealing with emissions and pollution sources from relevant sectors, such as transport, industry, agriculture, energy and climate, are key to enabling a decrease in pollutant concentration in all environments and to ensuring compliance, for example with air quality standards; CALLS ON the Commission and Member States to pursue consistency in this matter;
37. STRESSES that the revised industrial emissions directive is a key instrument for supporting an industrial transition towards sustainable, clean, climate neutral and circular production; CALLS ON the Commission to ensure that Best Available Techniques (BAT) Reference Documents are developed without delay and are fit to deliver on these goals;
38. RECALLS the Commission and Members States' active and constructive engagement in the negotiations on an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, with the ambition to finalize it by 2024; ACKNOWLEDGES the risks posed to the environment and health by microplastics and other plastic pollution; RECALLS the commitments in the EGD and the Circular Economy Action Plan 2.0 and therefore CALLS ON the Commission to take action and explore more possibilities to tackle all sources of microplastics in the environment through, among other things, restricting intentionally added microplastics in products and by addressing unintentional releases of microplastics;

39. RECOGNISES the fundamental importance of protecting, conserving and restoring nature, biodiversity and healthy ecosystems with their functions, services and essential role for human health, well-being, ability to adapt to climate change, and economic and social resilience, as well as the need to put biodiversity on the path to recovery by 2030 and to effectively address the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss; RECALLS that effective ecological connectivity and well-functioning green and blue infrastructure networks, in European landscapes and across the EU, are fundamental conditions for the functioning of ecosystems; REMAINS COMMITTED TO achieving the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; therefore ENCOURAGES Member States to submit aligned national targets and/or National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans in time for the 16th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in October 2024;
40. REITERATES its call to fully mainstream biodiversity into relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral plans and policies ensuring an integrated approach; CALLS ON Member States to mainstream an ecosystem approach and to progress towards nature positive economies and societies; WELCOMES efforts to further develop a robust biodiversity knowledge base at EU level and in the Member States;

41. RECOGNISES the importance of the natural nocturnal environment and the need to preserve it; CALLS ON the Commission to deepen scientific understanding of light pollution and its effects on biodiversity and various ecosystems, using existing satellite data, with the aim of preventing and minimising its negative impacts;
42. RECALLS the Council conclusions on Combating desertification in the EU, and REQUESTS the Commission to propose an integrated EU wide Action Plan to combat Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought, aiming at achieving the Land Degradation Neutrality by 2030, based on a full impact assessment, and to complement this Action Plan with measures supporting the proactive management of drought and its related phenomena in the EU;
43. RECALLS the importance of healthy and resilient marine ecosystems and the need to further develop knowledge, research and innovation on marine environment in this regard and to take the necessary measures to achieve a good environmental status for marine waters by elaborating a holistic and ecosystem-based approach to protect the seas and the oceans and use them sustainably , as required by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive including through regional cooperation, and stepping up the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; and NOTES that the EU and its Member States are committed to the swift ratification and implementation of the BBNJ Agreement; URGES all States to do the same;

Enabling conditions

44. UNDERLINES the need for social acceptance, inter alia through active communication and open dialogue on the EGD policies and their impact on society, especially its most vulnerable parts; ACKNOWLEDGES the European Economic and Social Committee Opinion on “advancing the EU's just transition policy framework: what measures are necessary?”; RECALLS the guidance provided by the Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality and CALLS ON Member States to fully implement it;
45. INVITES the Commission to explore ways to mainstream the just transition into policies and existing frameworks, as part of the Green Deal, capable of tackling the triple planetary crisis, while promoting social justice and decent work creation, for a full implementation of the SDGs; CALLS UPON the Commission and Member States, to ensure multi-level governance and to strengthen social dialogue and systems of collective bargaining, as well as cooperation between all relevant stakeholders, including through the inclusion of and outreach to marginalised and under-represented groups, when designing, implementing and evaluating policies to advance a green, just and inclusive transition;
46. CALLS ON Member States to further integrate just transition into national strategies analysing the socio-economic impacts, including labour impacts, of the ecological transition process and identifying mechanisms to support the most vulnerable and negatively impacted by the process, based on extensive participation from both civil society and public institutions; WELCOMES the establishment of a European Fair Transition Observatory by the European Commission; STRESSES the importance of a structural integration of just transition within the EU Institutions;

47. EMPHASISES the importance of just and inclusive transition policies and measures at all levels, including via lifelong learning, a strengthened commitment to gender mainstreaming and an intersectional assessment; URGES the Commission and INVITES Member States to structurally conduct impact assessments of transition policies on the living conditions of people, especially those living in or at risk of poverty;
48. CALLS ON the Commission and Member States to continue integrating the perspective of sustainability and a green, just and inclusive transition into the European Semester;
49. STRESSES the importance of skills forecasting and sound social and labour market policies and reskilling schemes and the attraction, retention and harnessing of talent, in line with the Council recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality;
50. ACKNOWLEDGES the importance of a multi-level, multi-sector and multi-actor perspective for a green, just and inclusive transition, taking into account the regional and local perspective and reality as well as the diversity of circumstances and the active involvement of social partners, civil societies, local communities, as well as SMEs; RECOGNIZES the key role not only of investments in technology, but also in human resources to make transition happen on the ground; URGES the Commission to ensure Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) in policy-making at all levels of governance;

51. URGES the Commission and Member States to improve the full implementation of the precautionary principle and the principles that preventive action should be taken, that environmental damage should, as a priority, be rectified at source and that the polluter should pay; STRESSES the importance of a more systemic, coherent, collaborative, risk-based and integrated approach as regards the state and outlook of the environment assessments and as regards policy actions; HIGHLIGHTS the potential of problem analysis in the Environment Implementation Review to inform national reforms in improving their administrative and judicial capacity to deliver the goals of environmental policy; CALLS ON the Commission and Member States to implement and enforce existing legislation and measures, taking into consideration the “do no significant harm” principle; INVITES the Commission and Member States to enhance supportive measures for companies and public authorities, to unlock investments, in particular for regional and local authorities, and to improve cohesion, access to justice, protection of citizens and transparency;
52. CALLS ON the Commission and Member States to ensure that, in line with the applicable rules, stakeholders receive concrete information well in advance on what is required of them, to allow them to adapt in due time to changes in the regulatory framework;

53. UNDERLINES the importance of coherent financing, including mainstreaming climate mitigation, climate adaptation and climate risks, biodiversity, circular economy and pollution-related risks and policy implementation into all relevant funds and financial instruments, and to reassess funding that may exacerbate vulnerabilities and inequalities; RECOGNIZES that efficient investments in biodiversity and ecosystems can increase their resilience and capacity to provide multiple comprehensive benefits and vital ecosystem services; RECOGNIZES the significant positive impacts the EU LIFE programme has had on European nature; CALLS ON the Commission and Member States to assess the need to develop further economic incentives to preserve healthy ecosystems, both inside and outside protected areas, and to restore damaged ones, and avenues for streamlining the EU, national and private funding in that regard; WELCOMES the Communication on Managing climate risks' plans to create the right preconditions for financing climate resilience and to make EU solidarity mechanisms future-proof and enhance incentives for anticipatory actions; ENCOURAGES relevant EU funding schemes to take long-term climate risk scenarios into account in line with applicable rules; RECALLS that the Polluter Pays Principle is key to financially tackling pollution, environmental damage and biodiversity loss and to compensating for negative impacts while supporting social fairness;

54. RECALLS the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law Making of 13 April 2016, stating that the Commission will carry out impact assessments of its initiatives which are expected to have significant economic, environmental or social impacts; UNDERLINES the importance of sound impact assessments when adopting new proposals for legislative acts, and where applicable, draft delegated acts and draft implementing acts to achieve better estimates of the environmental effects, estimates of costs as well as socio-economic consequences and benefits;
55. ENCOURAGES the Commission and Member States to work together to facilitate investment, and mobilise private finance for the green transition by ensuring adequate framework conditions, improving procedures and standards and with the EIB and other financial institutions de-risking projects, including by providing coherence for corporate transition plans; CALLS ON the Commission to ensure the coherence of environmental conditions between different EU funding instruments, while simplifying the application of the requirements of the current “do no significant harm”, “climate proofing” and “sustainability proofing” processes; RECOGNIZES the importance of the Sustainable Finance policy and legislation; HIGHLIGHTS the importance of establishing clear verification and certification mechanisms for sustainable investments and sustainable economic activities, while improving administrative procedures;
56. UNDERLINES the importance of a comprehensive investment agenda and an investment-friendly business environment, enhancing private investments with targeted support and promoting public investments to achieve the priority objectives of the green transition and to address the gaps; STRESSES the importance of transition risks assessment and the insurance sector; HIGHLIGHTS the importance of synergies, including between the Environmental Implementation Review, the European Semester and the national energy and climate plans under the Energy Union;

57. EMPHASISES the role of communication on the comprehensive and cross-sectoral benefits of environmental protection and on the costs of inactions, as well as the role of environmental and climate education to improve the implementation of environmental legislation and of awareness-raising to stimulate behavioural changes, particularly as regards production and consumption patterns; ENCOURAGES businesses to share evidence-based information to empower consumers to ensure a green, just and inclusive transition;
58. RECALLS that strengthening environmentally positive incentives as well as phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies, in particular fossil fuel subsidies that do not address energy poverty or just transition without delay, is an important enabling condition to reach the 8EAP priority objectives; REITERATING in this regard the enabling conditions as set out in article 3h of the 8EAP; CALLS FOR further use of market-based instruments and green public procurement to direct investments to green and climate objectives;

59. AFFIRMS the crucial cross-cutting role of nature-based solutions, in accordance with their definition in UNEA 5.2, Resolution 5, in addressing the global challenges-of the triple planetary crisis; ENCOURAGES Member States to prioritise their implementation, where appropriate;
60. HIGHLIGHTS the key role of research and innovation, and the importance of transferring their findings into the deployment of safe, resilient and sustainable new technologies and infrastructure, and digitalisation to support climate and environmental policies, while minimising their potential negative impacts and carbon and environmental footprint and ENCOURAGES the Commission to further streamline the existing environmental and climate monitoring frameworks, ensuring high standards of transparency, cost-efficiency, administrative simplification and public access to data and promoting the exchange of best-practices as well as regional development; BELIEVES the Industrial Emission Portal could be a suitable instrument for this purpose;
61. ENCOURAGES the Commission to continue working on ambitious, economically and technologically feasible, harmonised environmental objectives and standards to steer consumption towards sustainable, circular, low and near-zero carbon industry materials and goods, without compromising our ability to transform and license our economic activities into global competitive practices that are fit for a climate-neutral, circular, sustainable and resilient Europe, and with permit-issuing procedures that-ensure the efficient acceleration of all transitions whilst, ensuring an effective and consistent regulatory environment and incentivising more private investment.