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To:	Council
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Subject:	EU Macro-regional Strategies - Council conclusions on the added value of Macro-regional Strategies

1. A "Macro-regional Strategy" is an integrated framework, endorsed by the European Council, to address common challenges in a given geographical area where both Member States and third countries are located. The objective is to strengthen cooperation in order to achieve economic, social and territorial cohesion.

2. At this stage, the Union has initiated two Macro-regional Strategies. Thus, the European Council endorsed the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) in October 2009¹ and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) in June 2011², respectively. In addition, the European Council has invited the Commission to present an EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region by end 2014³.
3. The 2009 EUSBSR was initiated in light of the environmental deterioration of the Baltic Sea. The progress achieved was summarized in the Commission 2011 report on the Implementation of the EUSBSR⁴.
4. The 2011 EUSDR aimed at contributing to further integration of the internal market and to economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Danube region. In addition, an objective was to enhance cooperation with candidate and potential candidate countries in the Danube river basin on their European path. In line with the Council's invitation, the Commission presented in Spring a report concerning the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region⁵.
5. According to the December 2012 European Council conclusions, the Commission presented in June 2013 a report concerning the added value of macro-regional strategies⁶. A Friends of the Presidency (FoP) working party on macro-regional strategies was set up⁷ in order to analyse that report and with a view to drafting a set of Council conclusions on the concept and value added of macro-regional strategies, analysing the lessons learnt during the implementation of the EUSBSR and EUSDR as well as giving recommendations and ideas on the future prospects of the concept.
6. On 16 October 2013, a draft set of Council conclusions elaborated⁸ by the FoP, was endorsed by the Permanent Representatives Committee.

¹ 15265/1/09 Rev 1 - reference to Council conclusions in 13744/09.

² EUCO 23/1/11 - reference to Council conclusions in 8743/1/11 Rev 1.

³ EUCO 205/12.

⁴ 12048/11.

⁵ 8509/13.

⁶ 11915/13.

⁷ 12032/13.

⁸ 14745/13 ADD 1.

7. On this background, the Council is invited to adopt the draft Council conclusions on the added value of Macro-regional Strategies as set out in the Addendum to the present note.
