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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
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To:	Delegations

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Subject:	Conclusions on Special report No 21/2021 from the European Court of Auditors entitled 'EU funding for biodiversity and climate change in EU forests' - <i>Council Conclusions</i> (20 December 2021)
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Delegations will find in the annex the Council Conclusions on Special report No 21/2021 from the European Court of Auditors entitled 'EU funding for biodiversity and climate change in EU forests', as approved by the Environment Council on 20 December 2021.

**Council Conclusions on Special report No 21/2021 from the European of Auditors entitled
‘EU funding for biodiversity and climate change in EU forests’**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

(1) RECALLING

- the Council Conclusions of 15 November 2021 on *The New EU Forest Strategy for 2030*¹;
- the Council Conclusions of 16 December 2019 on the *Communication on Stepping Up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World’s Forests*²;
- the Council Conclusions of 23 October 2020 on *Biodiversity - the need for urgent action*³;
- the Council Conclusions of 10 June 2021 on the new *EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change*⁴;
- the Council Conclusions of 17 December 2020 on *Making the Recovery Circular and Green*⁵;
- the Council Conclusions of 29 November 2019 on the updated *EU Bioeconomy Strategy*⁶;
- the Council Conclusions of 19 October 2020 on the *Farm to Fork Strategy*⁷;

(2) WELCOMES the Special Report No 21/2021 from the European Court of Auditors (‘the Court’) entitled ‘EU funding for biodiversity and climate change in EU forests: positive but limited results’. EXPRESSES the view that an earlier publication of the Special Report would have benefitted the preparations of the EU Forest Strategy for 2030 and the major work on the future funding under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

¹ Doc 13984/21
² Doc 15151/19
³ Doc. 12210/20
⁴ Doc. 9694/21
⁵ Doc. 14167/20
⁶ Doc. 14594/19
⁷ Doc. 12099/20

- (3) RECOGNISING the specific focus of the Special Report, STRESSES the need to address forests holistically and RECALLS the multifunctional role of forests and the principle of sustainable forest management. RECOMMENDS that more examples from a wider variety of Member States should be analysed in a report that draws conclusions for the EU as a whole.
- (3a) NOTING the need to address existing discrepancies and possible gaps in the forest data in various reports, CONSIDERS necessary to take into account sound and transparent data and information on forests from different sources, such as “State of Europe’s Forests 2020”, reported according to internationally agreed criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management.
- (4) ACKNOWLEDGES the importance of the use of the existing EU funding for forests by several Member States. REMINDING that Member States use their own resources to finance various forestry measures in line with sustainable forest management, including to protect biodiversity and address climate change.
- (5) ACKNOWLEDGES the recommendations included in the Special Report by the Court, and TAKES NOTE that the Commission has accepted these recommendations.
- (6) EXPRESSES the view that the Court’s recommendations to strengthen the fight against illegal logging will be addressed by the Commission’s legislative proposal on making available of certain commodities and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation on the Union market as well as export from the Union, and repealing Regulation (EU) No 995/2010.
- (7) AGREES with the importance of remote sensing for forest monitoring, however HIGHLIGHTS that such data must always be complemented by data collected on the ground. In this respect, POINTS OUT the existing national information systems and tools, such as the national forest inventories.

- (8) INVITES the Commission, in close cooperation with the Member States, to consider the views expressed in these Council Conclusions when implementing the Courts' recommendations.
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