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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
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Subject:	Forging a climate-resilient Europe – the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change - Revised draft Council conclusions

With a view to the informal videoconference of the members of the Working Party on the Environment (WPE) on 26 April 2021, delegations will find in the Annex revised draft Council conclusions on the above, as prepared by the Presidency taking into account previous discussions and written comments received from delegations.

Changes compared to the previous version of the text (document 7324/21) are **bold underlined** and deletions marked with [...]. Delegations are in addition invited to note that the numbering of the paragraphs has changed.

Forging a climate-resilient Europe – the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change

- Draft Council conclusions -

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING the Council conclusions on:

- **the Biodiversity Strategy**¹
- **the Farm to Fork Strategy**²
- **on perspectives for the EU forest-related policies and EU forest strategy post 2020**³
- **on Climate and Energy Diplomacy - Delivering on the external dimension of the European Green Deal**⁴;

RECOGNIZING that extreme events related to climate change are becoming more frequent, more intense and more persistent, and that slow-onset events affect ever-larger areas, both **increasing the risk of** significant human, material and natural losses;

RECOGNIZING the urgent need for the European Union and its Member States **and all other countries** to enhance their adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change, as a key component of the long-term global response to climate change; **NOTING the overall cost-effectiveness of adaptation action and the tangible added benefits for society that successful climate-adaptation can bring;**

1 **12210/20.**

2 **12099/20.**

3 **12695/1/20 REV 1.**

4 **5263/21.**

RECOGNIZING that [...] adaptation [...] **and** mitigation **efforts are of equal importance;**
STRESSING the need to ensure that all related initiatives under the European Green Deal
are mutually supportive;

RECOGNIZING the work already carried out **by the EU and its Member States** as **a** result of the 2013 EU Adaptation Strategy; UNDERLINING the fact that all Member States have adopted a national adaptation strategy and or plan;

RECOGNIZING the national character and needs of climate change adaptation, as the consequences of a changing climate depend on national, regional and local conditions;

RECOGNIZING that climate impacts are experienced differently by more exposed, vulnerable, or marginalised communities.

Forging a climate-resilient Union

1. STRONGLY WELCOMES the Commission’s Communication “Forging a climate-resilient Europe – the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change” (“the Strategy”);
ACKNOWLEDGES the Strategy as a key initiative of the European Green Deal in the pursuit of the green transformation and for sustainable growth; ENDORSES its long-term vision of a climate-resilient Union by 2050 that is [...] adapted to the unavoidable impacts of climate change **to the maximum extent possible;**
2. CONSIDERS that the economic recovery from the pandemic must be based on efficient solutions focusing on increasing climate resilience, in particular nature-based solutions⁵
fostering biodiversity as well as climate change [...] adaptation and **mitigation;**

⁵ **Defined as solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience; see also <https://ec.europa.eu/research/environment/index.cfm?pg=nbs>.**

Smarter adaptation

3. RECOGNIZES the importance of improving climate risk and disaster management **as well as early-warning systems** as key to minimising losses, reducing economic **and societal** costs, **improving the health and well-being of citizens as well as to improving resilience to enhancing biodiversity**; in this context EMPHASIZES the need to **exchange and** acquire more **comparable** and better data for assessing climate risks and **to** make better use of existing **data**, knowledge **and platforms to identify potentially multidimensional impacts of climate related hazards**; **in addition, STRESSES that integrated approaches to disaster risk management and urban built heritage should be sought, thus strengthening the disaster preparedness of the built heritage while also increasing the resilience of European cities**;
4. SUPPORTS the Commission's intention to strengthen the development and the use of digital technologies for data collection, **data representation and climate change scenarios to underpin informed decision-making, including exchange of knowledge, best practices and solutions while using synergies and preventing double work and structures**; **In this regard, STRESSES in particular the importance of further developing the Copernicus program for assessing climate change impacts, including data at the local level**;
5. UNDERLINES the role of the Climate-ADAPT platform and WELCOMES the intention of the Commission to further update and expand its capabilities, **in consultation with Member States**, including its role in enhancing monitoring and reporting on adaptation; **INVITES the Commission to support Member States, including regional and local authorities, in the access to climate-related risk data and adaptation technologies**;
6. NOTES that climate change and the resulting geographical shifts in **distribution of** pathogens, **as well as more frequent and more extreme heatwaves** have significant effects on health and on the quality of life; therefore, WELCOMES the establishment of the European Climate and Health Observatory; **STRESSES the need to further define the responsibilities and objectives of the Health observatory**; also **RECOGNIZES the importance of the One Health approach**;

More systemic adaptation

7. **UNDERLINES** the **overarching** need to promote the systemic nature of adaptation by enhancing adaptation mainstreaming into all relevant [...] legislation and policies in a coherent and consistent manner **at all levels including** through enhanced cross-sectoral communication and coordination, **as well as the utilization of existing processes, instruments and measures to strengthen resilience; UNDERLINES that all adaptation strategies and plans at all levels must be based on the latest science; WELCOMES** the proposed policy coherence principles: ensuring that regulation and funding take into account **the effects of climate change and the associated risks** to avoid creating new exposure; reducing existing risk by building up resilience, prevention and preparedness and managing residual risk;
8. **RECOGNIZES** the relevance of the monitoring **and evaluation** process to assess the effectiveness and performance of adaptation policies and measures; [...] **furthermore INVITES the Commission to develop, in close coordination with Member States, further guidance on adaptation monitoring, reporting and evaluation, including through the use of a harmonised framework of standards and indicators that reflect adequately regional specificities; and to establish guidelines setting out common principles and practices for the identification, classification and prudent management of material physical climate risks when planning, developing, executing and monitoring projects, through climate vulnerability and risk assessments; moreover, STRESSES the need to prevent the duplication of data collection, monitoring and reporting requirements and to promote synergies with existing processes and requests at Union or international level and building on national experience and practice;**
9. **NOTES** the relevance of developing further tools to integrate climate scenarios and potential impacts into economic **and financial** policies in order to enhance macro-fiscal resilience and **unsure that fiscal frameworks are** climate-proof **and sustainable, in particular, with regard to climate-resilient infrastructure investments;** **INVITES** the Commission to further elaborate and explore, in consultation with Member States, ways to measure **and manage** the potential impact of climate-related risks on public finances;

10. **WELCOMES the intention of the Commission to explore ways to further facilitate and foster cooperation between local, regional and national levels in their respective adaptation work;** EMPHASIZES the importance of increasing local resilience, the role of local and regional administrations as key drivers of adaptation **and the need to support them accordingly at Union level while taking account of the principle of subsidiarity;** STRESSES that the implementation of climate adaptation **depends to a large extent** on local **and regional conditions, including an optimal implementation of nature based solutions, which will enable** specific climate vulnerabilities **to be addressed** effectively and efficiently, taking also into account **other environmental vulnerabilities as well as** the availability of freshwater throughout the year in each of these territories; **INVITES the Commission to provide further guidance, knowledge and information on the best available adaptation measures and solutions for local authorities;**
11. RECALLS the need to **further empower citizens in order to step up action on** adaptation [...] and to ensure the leadership of local communities in the design and implementation of adaptation measures to promote **the achievement of resilience in a just and fair way;** **STRESSES the importance of considering the social justice considerations and distributional effects of the impacts of climate change and of ensuring that no one is left behind;**

Faster adaptation

12. UNDERLINES that it is crucial to ensure adequate financing in order to accelerate adaptation action; **In this regard,** HIGHLIGHTS the increased spending target to **at least** 30% for climate action, including adaptation, in the **Multiannual Financial Framework** for 2021-2027, **and at least 37% under the Recovery and Resilience Facility;** **REMAINS FULLY COMMITTED to working towards the ambition of reaching the 7,5% in 2024 and 10% in 2026 and in 2027 of annual spending targets for biodiversity under the Multiannual Financial Framework, while considering the existing overlaps between climate and biodiversity goals;**

13. STRESSES that the private and public sectors need to work together more closely, in particular on financing adaptation; ACKNOWLEDGES the private sector’s critical role in mobilizing and leveraging the capital required **and in delivering the necessary technology and solutions; UNDERLINES** the relevance of **the EU taxonomy for the identification and development of** sustainable activities for climate adaptation, **fully** respecting the ‘do no significant harm’ principle **within the meaning of the EU taxonomy Regulation**⁶ and avoiding maladaptation; **INVITES the Commission to compile examples of best practices and solutions in the context of financing of adaptation measures both in the public and private sector;**
14. **UNDERLINES the need for better understanding of the exposure of private investments to climate related risks; in this context WELCOMES the entry into force of the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation [and LOOKS FORWARD to the Commission proposals on the revision of the Non-Financial Reporting Directive and the Renewed Sustainable Finance Strategy];**
15. ACKNOWLEDGES the importance of research and innovation in the improved understanding of climate change impacts and the development of adaptation solutions; WELCOMES the proposed role of the Horizon Europe Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change, including Societal Transformation, as well as of other adaptation-relevant Missions, including on soil, health **and food**, climate-neutral **and smart** cities, **healthy** oceans **and seas, as well as coastal and inland waters**, in the roll-out of solutions which aim to improve Europe’s climate-preparedness, accelerate adaptation actions and deepen societal transformation towards climate-resilience; **INVITES the Commission to focus on upscaling successful pilot studies and the implementation of measures;**

⁶ **Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2020 on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment, and amending Regulation (EU) 2019/2088.**

16. RECOGNIZES the importance of the climate-water nexus as many hazards of climate change are related to the hydrological system (sea level rise, intensive rainfall, **floods**, drought, melting of glaciers); HIGHLIGHTS the challenges related to the increased risk **related to situations where there is not enough water or, conversely, too much water, in particular severe droughts and the changes in the availability of fresh water due, inter alia, to changes in the precipitation regime, [...] in terms of quantity, quality and distribution throughout the year; furthermore STRESSES that the problem of water scarcity will be exacerbated by rising temperatures and, consequently, will lead to increased evaporation and greater need for water in different environments, including urban; AFFIRMS the fundamental role that sustainable water management and healthy water-related ecosystems play in overall climate resilience; RECOGNIZES the essential link between water and climate change, and SUPPORTS the continued promotion of Integrated Water Resource Management and effective sustainable and integrated water governance, with the involvement of all sectors, which foster cooperative approaches to the transboundary challenges of water;**
17. NOTES that nature-based solutions, including the **sustainable management restoration and conservation** of ecosystems, **which enhance biodiversity and contribute to the increase of areas with natural habitats, as well as other rural and notably urban approaches, including greening of cities, changing to less water-demanding crops, promoting water reuse**, are particularly well suited for **climate change adaptation measures; HIGHLIGHTS their important role in improving** climate resilience to water impacts, essential for sustaining healthy water, oceans and soils, and that they can significantly boost the supply of clean, fresh water and reduce the risk of flooding **and droughts**; STRESSES the need for increased valorisation of ecosystem services as part of a nature-based approach to climate adaptation, in particular those associated with **sustainable agriculture**, forest resilience, biodiversity and the water cycle; **ACKNOWLEDGES that an ecosystem-based management of resources and the reduction of non-climatic stressors can improve terrestrial and marine ecosystem resilience and maintain ecosystem services for citizens;**

18. CALLS for integrated cross-sector and cross-border water management [...] that contributes to increased resilience, the promotion of sustainable water use, the protection of aquatic ecosystems and the improvement of flood risk **and drought** management strategies, incorporating future floods **and drought** risk and arranging timely and reliable exchange of data and warnings;
19. STRESSES the need to fully mainstream climate adaptation into spatial planning aspects and management in EU and Member States' frameworks by considering the potential impacts of climate change in the spatial distribution of climate risks, the risk and viability of projects, and the overall long-term rationality of spatial organisation models; **EMPHASIZES the need to do more to prepare building stock in the EU to withstand the impacts of climate change, including by supporting the integration of climate resilience considerations into the criteria for the construction and renovation of buildings and critical infrastructure;**
20. WELCOMES the set of actions identified in the Commission's Communication as they provide [...] guidance **for the** collection **of** data, best practices and reports **on** the impacts of climate change and how to implement adaptation activities; INVITES the Commission to provide Member States with further background on **as well as a timeline for** the Strategy's various implementation measures and instruments and to update the Council on a regular basis on the implementation of the initiatives outlined in the Communication;
21. RECOGNIZES the need to close the insurance protection gap for climate-related **risks and** disasters by increasing the insurance penetration rate so as to decrease the economic and societal losses in the event of natural disasters; **RECOGNIZES** the use of insurance as a risk transfer mechanism to absorb financial losses related to climate risks as **one of the steps** towards enhanced risk management and anticipation rather than post-disaster actions; INVITES the Commission, **in consultation with Member States,** to develop a framework that enhances the use of insurance against climate-related risks, **and to support Member States in disseminating the use of insurance against climate-related risks;**

22. RECOGNIZES that the EU's outermost regions already face stark adaptation challenges as a result of their specific vulnerabilities that makes them particularly susceptible to the effects of climate change; WELCOMES all efforts to mitigate such effects, such as the exchange of best practices and solutions to common adaptation challenges among the outermost regions and with their neighbours, to be fostered and supported by the Commission, and the endorsement of global and regional adaptation-relevant initiatives, such as the All-Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance.

Stepping up international action

23. WELCOMES the introduction of the international dimension in the Strategy, **taking into account that climate change impacts are having far-reaching effects both within and outside the Union**; RECALLS that the Paris Agreement established the global goal on adaptation, **thus recognizing the importance of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, and of the importance of support for an international cooperation on adaptation efforts**; **RECOGNIZES the importance of a balanced approach between action on mitigation and adaptation** [*Placeholder for Adaptation communication in line with the Paris Agreement for submission to the UNFCCC*];
24. UNDERLINES that many of our international partners have long been on the frontlines of climate change and have valuable experience that can help Europe to become more climate resilient; **STRESSES the EU's role in supporting adaptation globally, and EMPHASIZES the need to provide continued support to countries particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and those which are particularly proactive partners in climate actions, with specific focus on adaptation in the Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States and Africa**;

25. **UNDERLINES that a humanity-development-peace nexus approach is essential to achieve just and fair adaptation; EMPHASIZES the importance of integrating a gender perspective in a systematic way of the implementation of the international dimension of the new Climate Adaptation Strategy;**
26. RECOGNIZES that in an increasingly globalized world we are all closely interconnected and that the impacts of climate change have knock-on effects across borders and continents; **STRESSES the need for deepened political engagement on climate change adaptation with international and regional partners and partner countries; UNDERLINES the importance of global and multi-stakeholder partnerships with public and private entities for the achievement of our goals, including sharing and applying of knowledge expertise and innovations; RECOGNIZES the importance of development and exchange of evidence-based information and the need for developing adaptation impact measurement methodologies and metrics; STRESSES the need for exchanging knowledge and expertise on innovative solutions, as well as to enable the application of local knowledge and to apply local knowledge and increase ownership of adaptation actions among local governments and actors;** UNDERLINES the effects of climate change as a **threat multiplier in the context of** international stability and security, affecting in particular people in already fragile and vulnerable situations; **EMPHASIZES the need for appropriate climate risk and foresight assessments highlighting possible security implications of climate change;**
27. UNDERLINES that the EU's external action on adaptation should be based on the economic, environmental and societal development model of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, **the Paris Agreement and its goals and implementation framework as well as** the European Green Deal, **with a strong emphasis** on resilience, planning, support for local groups, prevention, **long term maintenance** and **risk**-informed decision-making **and, taking into account national policies, strategies and plans of partner countries of EU external action;**

28. ACKNOWLEDGES that there is an urgent need for [...] international finance for climate change adaptation **in line with the Paris Agreement**, both from public and private sources; STRESSES the need [...] to leverage private finance for adaptation in partner countries, **for example through innovative solutions; RECONFIRMS the commitment of the EU and its Members States to further scale up the mobilization of international climate finance; STRESSES that external funding instruments should address mitigation and adaptation action in a balanced manner; URGES all developed countries, and other parties in a position to do so, including International Financial Institutions and development banks, to scale up their own contributions, underlining the importance of increased finance for adaptation, and transparency in the implementation and continuous assessment of the effectiveness of the funding provided.**
