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**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations  
Subject: Council Conclusions on Gender in Development

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At its meeting on 26 May 2015, the Council adopted the Council conclusions as set out in the annex to this note.

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**Council Conclusions on Gender in Development**

1. 2015 is a pivotal year for gender equality, human rights and the empowerment of women and girls in the global context with the inter-governmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. In that context, particular focus must be put on promoting and fulfilling the rights of women and girls, notably in light of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Council reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Cairo Programme of Action, and the outcomes of their review conferences, and the fulfilment of the obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It further welcomes the Political Declaration adopted at the 59<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and the calls for the full realisation of women's and girls' full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls throughout their life cycle.
2. The High Level Event on 'Women's Empowerment and Sustainable Development', hosted by the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in Riga on 2 March 2015 in the context of the European Year of Development, provided an opportunity to renew political momentum and to reaffirm the strong EU commitment on gender equality, social justice, non-discrimination and human rights.

3. The EU and its Member States remain committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights for all. The Council welcomes the leading role that the EU and its Member States are playing in supporting international initiatives to promote women's and girls' rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and calls for continued cooperation and coordination with UN bodies, notably UN Women, as well as with other relevant international fora and actors. Women's organisations are crucial partners of the EU with respect to the full realisation of women's and girls' rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.
4. The Council stresses the need for an ambitious and transformative approach to address the root causes and risk factors of gender inequality, discrimination and violence against women and girls. The Council reiterates that women's and girls' rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls must be at the core of the post-2015 agenda, both as a stand-alone goal and as a cross-cutting issue, which should be integrated into the targets and indicators of all the Sustainable Development Goals. It should also be an essential element of financial and non-financial means of implementation and of the mechanisms for review, monitoring and accountability of the post-2015 agenda. The Council further stresses the importance of alignment with Financing for Development, notably in light of the upcoming third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July 2015.
5. The Council emphasises that gender equality is both a goal in itself and a means to achieve sustainable development and stresses that ambitious objectives for women's and girls' rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls must be matched with adequate financial and non-financial means of implementation, and a strong political commitment from all actors and at all levels. Gender mainstreaming and concrete actions should be taken to implement and improve gender-responsive policies, programmes and regulations, including budgeting that is gender sensitive and addresses inequalities.

6. The Council stresses that women's and girls' rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls remains a policy priority for EU's external action and development cooperation, and should be strengthened and coherent in all areas without exception. The Council recalls the importance of adopting an integrated three pronged approach that effectively combines gender mainstreaming in all stages of EU development policies and programmes, as well as in joint programming processes, gender specific actions, and political and policy dialogue with all partner countries.
7. The Council underlines the importance of ensuring coherence between EU internal and external policies at all levels in guaranteeing the fulfilment of rights of women and girls, and of groups as LGBTI. In particular, the Council reiterates the need to ensure policy coherence for development and consistency between the next Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, the successor to the current EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development (GAP), the comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the UNSC Resolutions 1325 and 1820, the new policy strategy for gender equality in the EU after 2015, the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy.
8. The Council reaffirms the commitment of the EU and its Member States to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls, including through abolishing discriminatory laws, policies, norms and practices that restrict women's full political, economic and social participation and influence at all levels of society. Special attention should also be paid to multiple discrimination against women and girls and their marginalisation.
9. The Council reiterates the importance of full implementation of the EU guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them. The EU and its Member States are committed to the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls in public and in private spheres, including trafficking in human beings, domestic violence, harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting, and child, early and forced marriage. Particular attention should be paid to gender based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, including sexual violence.

10. The Council remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the outcomes of their review conferences and remains committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), in this context. Having that in mind, the Council reaffirms the EU's commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. The Council further stresses the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and health-care services. The Council invites all EU institutions to continue their work on these issues in line with the Policy Coherence for Development principles. The Council stresses the importance of advancing understanding of the components and elements related to SRHR in EU's development policy and invites the Commission to report back to the Council within a year on that matter.
11. The EU recognises the interlinkages between peace, security, development and gender equality, as well as the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, in peace negotiations, mediation and in peace-building. The EU is committed to increasing women's participation in peace negotiations and peace-building, particularly through supporting the role of civil society and grassroots women's organisations.

12. The Council reiterates the EU's strong commitment to the full implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 and calls for an ambitious outcome of the Resolution's High-Level Review in October 2015. The Council highlights the need to take further action to integrate a gender perspective in all stages, elements and instruments of the EU peace and security agenda, as well as to enhance expertise and resources in missions and operations undertaken in the context of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and encourages to monitor performance by means of quantitative and qualitative benchmarks and targets. The Council welcomes the intention by the HR/VP in the coming review of the EEAS to establish a high-level function dedicated for UNSCR 1325 and gender related matters.
13. The Council recognises that women and girls are disproportionately affected by the scale of global food and nutrition insecurity and the impact of natural and man-made disasters. The Council underlines the importance of due attention being paid to these impacts in the EU's response to humanitarian emergencies and in broader development policy and programming, including disaster risk reduction. The Council also recognises the central role of women as food producers, particularly as smallholder farmers.
14. The Council underlines the importance of adopting a holistic and inclusive approach to promote women's and girls' rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all spheres of society and throughout their life cycle, building on multi-stakeholder partnerships with private and public actors, including civil society organisations, human rights defenders, professional associations, the private sector and academia.
15. The Council stresses the importance of promoting women's full participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, public and private life. The Council underlines the need to promote and protect the space for collective action and the work of civil society, including non-governmental organisations and women's and community-based organisations to lobby and advocate for women's rights and the advancement and promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

16. The Council underlines the importance of investing in and ensuring women's and girls' access to and attainment of equitable and quality primary, secondary and tertiary education, in safe, equitable and gender transformative learning environment, as well as technical and vocational training and life-long learning opportunities.
17. Furthermore, the Council stresses the importance of ensuring sufficient and effective access by women and girls to other quality essential services, including health care encompassing services related to comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support, as well as to clean water and adequate sanitation.
18. The Council recognises that women's economic empowerment is an end in itself and a precondition for achieving sustainable development and inclusive growth. The Council stresses the key role of the private sector to provide financial support, training and employment opportunities to women as well as to promote gender-responsive corporate social responsibility (CSR). The Council underlines the need to create an enabling environment, notably by removing social and legal barriers to women's access to productive assets, including land and other natural and economic resources, promoting financial inclusion, as well as adequate and accessible social protection systems for women of all ages, and decent work standards including equal pay for equal work. The Council further underlines the importance of supporting women's entrepreneurship, including through inclusive financial and business development services, facilities and training, and the use of enabling technologies such as ICTs.
19. The Council underlines the need to involve men and boys and to promote their active engagement and responsibility in supporting behavioural change, addressing discriminatory social norms and combating gender stereotypes. The Council underlines in particular the need to achieve better recognition and equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work between women and men as well as equal decision-making in households. In this context, the Council also refers to relevant ILO Conventions<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> ILO Conventions no 100, 111, 183, 189

20. The Council underlines the need to continue strengthening the work on gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment in all areas of sustainable development, including climate change, macroeconomic policy, labour market, private sector development, trade, livelihoods, agriculture, energy, transport, infrastructure and urban development.
21. The Council takes note of the fourth report on the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015<sup>2</sup>, covering the period from July 2013 to June 2014. The Council welcomes the progress being made in areas such as political dialogue, coordination, partnerships and the strong EU position on the post-2015 agenda. However, the Council expresses concern with regard to the very slow and incomplete implementation of the Action Plan and lack of progress on issues such as gender analysis, statistics, monitoring, financial tracking, delivery and impact. The Council urges the Commission to implement the report's recommendations and looks forward to a final report on the implementation of the current GAP.
22. The Council also welcomes the report on the Evaluation of the EU Support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Partner Countries for the period 2007-2013. The Council takes note of the findings and conclusions of the report and urges the Commission and the EEAS to implement its main recommendations, notably in the successor to the current GAP, starting with a fully-fledged management response. The Council is concerned with the performance of most EU Delegations which are not sufficiently taking gender equality into consideration, for example by not implementing compulsory gender equality assessments in Results Oriented Monitoring.

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<sup>2</sup> ST 5732/15



23. The Council calls for revitalised commitment and leadership from the Commission and the EEAS on the EU's ambition for achieving gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. The Council underlines the need to make gender a priority, encourage best practices, strengthen accountability and transparency, and ensure all programming decisions are evidence based and linked to results. In particular, the Council calls on the Commission and EEAS to take more significant action to strengthen the role and responsibility of EU Delegations and to prioritise and invest in high quality gender analysis as the basis for country level strategies, programming and policy and political dialogue.
24. The Council underlines the importance of strategic monitoring, evaluation and follow-up and the need to clarify and strengthen reporting, including statistics, accountability arrangements and management responses to achieve results. In particular, the Council stresses the need to define clear targets and meaningful indicators, measured by data disaggregated by sex, age and other factors, as well as to improve tracking of budgetary allocations and expenditures and results measurement. In doing so, close and consistent linkages should be sought with the post-2015 agenda and the new EU International Cooperation and Development Results Framework. The Council stresses that more emphasis must be given to gender in the EU Results Framework and calls on the Commission to report against sex and age disaggregated indicators.
25. The Council calls for an enhanced and more strategic and human rights based approach, containing key transformative priorities for tackling gender inequality and addressing existing gaps for gender equality and the empowerment and full realisation of fundamental freedoms and human rights of all women and girls. The Council looks forward to an ambitious and robust successor to the current GAP, covering the period from 2016 to 2020. The Council stresses the need to build upon the progress of the current GAP, while keeping its three-pronged approach, apply lessons learned and fully address remaining shortfalls and challenges, as well as to focus on results. The Council calls on the Commission to ensure that the successor to the current GAP reflects all of the EU's external action. The Council welcomes and further encourages the inclusive approach being adopted by the EU and its Member States, and looks forward to the ongoing work being carried out by the Taskforce in view of preparing the new GAP.

26. The Council calls on the Commission to secure sufficient financial and human resources in order to fully deliver on the EU's commitments on women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The Council further reiterates the need to transform institutional cultures and to strengthen political leadership and increase capacity, coordination, coherence, complementarity and accountability in order for the EU and its Member States to lead by example.
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