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Subject: 2023 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's
External Action Instruments in 2022
- Council conclusions (7 May 2024)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on the 2023 Annual Report on the Implementation of the European Union's External Action Instruments in 2022, as approved by the Council at its 4021st meeting held on 7 May 2024.

Council conclusions on the 2023 Annual Report on the Implementation of the European Union's External Action Instruments in 2022

1. The Council recalls the importance of strengthening the EU's international partnerships, in particular in the current challenging geopolitical context, marked by the consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, increased instability in the Middle East, Sahel and other parts of the world, the prolonged economic, social, educational and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ongoing climate and biodiversity crisis. The EU's external action instruments and Global Gateway strategy are key tools for cooperating with partners, strengthening multilateralism, upholding democratic values and human rights and advancing the EU's geopolitical role and policy priorities, through the Team Europe approach.
2. The Council notes that the EU and its Member States are collectively the world's largest development partner and trading bloc, a leading global investor and the second-largest humanitarian donor. The EU and its Member States, in a Team Europe approach, collectively provided EUR 92.1 billion in 2022, accounting for 42 % of global official development assistance (ODA). The EU and its Member States contribute to eradicating poverty, addressing the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss, tackling inequalities, including gender inequality, and promoting sustainable development, peace and stability — including through the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach and needs-based, principled and gender-responsive humanitarian action – and by promoting sustainable investment, human rights, democracy, good governance and the rule of law. The EU's external instruments are key to increasing the coherence between the EU's development, foreign, climate, trade and security policies, as well as demonstrating EU global leadership, responsibility and solidarity. In this regard, the EU and its Member States affirm that policy coherence for sustainable development is an important principle for achieving more effective development cooperation.
3. The Council welcomes the annual report on the implementation of the European Union's external action instruments in 2022, which showcases the EU's partnerships and their results. These partnerships are based on political will on both sides, on shared values and interests, on the principle of effective multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, on the promotion of sustainability and on respect for universal human rights, democracy, good governance and the rule of law.

4. The Council appreciates the fact that the report covers key aspects of the EU's financial support in 2022 concerning international partnerships and development policy, European neighbourhood policy, humanitarian assistance and civil protection, EU enlargement policy, peace, security and defence, crisis response and preparedness, human rights and democracy, gender equality and support for EU foreign policy objectives. The Council also welcomes the report's effort to show how the EU's external action, through its various instruments, the Global Gateway strategy and EU enlargement policy, contributes to the EU's geopolitical role, peace and security and policy priorities. This includes but also goes beyond and complements ODA.
5. The Council also acknowledges the report's contribution to reporting on the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in this Decade of Action, along with the Paris Agreement and the new European Consensus on Development. The Council acknowledges the annual report's importance for the transparency and accountability of EU external action, as well as for strategic reflection and communication. The Council welcomes the report as a useful monitoring tool for scrutinising the implementation of the EU's external action instruments against the EU's strategic objectives, including the implementation of the Global Gateway strategy.
6. The Council welcomes the emphasis on the geographic chapter, which describes how the EU's external action contributes to EU policy priorities in every region in which it operates. Regarding the thematic chapter, the Council welcomes in particular the emphasis on human development, including health, social protection, gender equality, education and food and nutrition security as well as the impacts of climate change. In this context, the Council recalls the Council conclusions on human development of 14 June 2021.
7. The Council welcomes the report's emphasis on the key support provided by the EU to Ukraine and neighbouring countries affected by the war as well as efforts to address the regional and global consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the impact on the most vulnerable groups, in particular with regard to food and energy security. The Council encourages the Commission to continue highlighting EU support to tackle global challenges. The Council welcomes the fact that EU efforts in support of Ukraine did not come at the expense of support for other partner countries, in particular least developed countries and the most vulnerable countries.

8. The Council underlines the necessity of adopting an integrated and coherent EU response to external crises and conflicts, including through the EU's external action instruments. Preventing conflict through timely analysis and early action, supporting peace mediation and dialogue, building peace and resilience, and forging international and regional partnerships in the area of peace, security and defence are key aspects in this regard. Flexibility and responsiveness in the EU's strategies will be crucial to maintain relevance and effectiveness in a dynamic international environment.
9. The Council appreciates the fact that the report includes EU support to overcome the long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, international health crisis preparedness, and the EU's commitments regarding climate-related financing and the protection of biodiversity. The Council stresses the importance of ensuring climate financing addresses both mitigation and adaptation and reaches the most vulnerable communities including Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The Council also welcomes the attention given by the report to migration and forced displacement. In this regard, the Council recalls the importance of designing, financing and implementing EU initiatives tackling irregular migration and its root causes and addressing forced displacement, in a Team Europe approach.
10. The Council underlines the importance of the EU's external action adhering to the principles of effective development cooperation, not least to ensure the operational ability of the EU's external instruments to effectively deliver on the targets and ambitions set out in their respective legal frameworks, based on the political and strategic steering of the Council. The Council appreciates the continuous improvement of the reporting by the Commission services and the EEAS on the concrete results and impact of EU interventions, including the results and financial annexes. The Council encourages the Commission to include more prominently data and results analysis on the contribution to Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)-Global Europe targets in the upcoming report, as well as on support for least developed countries, in line with Article 41 of the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation. The Council encourages the use of disaggregated data by sex as appropriate.

11. The Council commends the efforts made to reach a share of 32.4 % of commitments to support social protection and human development, 13.6 % for migration-related projects, 9.2 % in support of education, as well as the trend towards a share of 85 % of actions contributing to gender equality. The Council calls on the Commission to further develop actions responding to climate change and protecting biodiversity, in order to reach the agreed targets. The Council takes note of the progress made towards the institutional and strategic targets set out in EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III ‘An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in EU External Action’, as welcomed through Presidency conclusions and as reflected in the annual report.
12. The Council welcomes the reporting on the implementation of the EU’s external action instruments and the achievements of the Team Europe approach, including the implementation of the Global Gateway strategy and Team Europe initiatives. In this context, the Council is committed to strengthening the focus on results and inclusiveness, enhancing transparency and mutual accountability, and furthering ownership by partners, to promote effective development cooperation and a needs-based approach, as well as to counter corruption both as a risk and an obstacle to development. The Council also recalls that proactive and timely information sharing, close and inclusive consultation, coordination, financial monitoring and flexibility by all relevant stakeholders in a Team Europe approach is essential for joint actions to have a sustainable and long-lasting impact. The Council calls on the EU Delegations to fully exercise their coordinating role in Team Europe in NDICI programming and implementation in partner countries, by closely involving Member States’ embassies in the spirit of working better together. The Council welcomes the continuous involvement of the private sector, including through the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+) instrument.
13. The Council appreciates the timely publication of the report in line with Article 41 of the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation and welcomes efforts to promote equal opportunities and meet accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Council recalls that the inclusivity of the EU’s external action contributes to the reduction of fragility and inequalities, while supporting dignity and human development.

14. The Council welcomes the new approach to strategic communication in external action implemented by the Commission services and the EEAS. The Council supports strategic communication activities as well as the strengthening of those activities to counter foreign information manipulation and interference, including disinformation. Strategic communication, simultaneously at HQ and EU Delegation level, will increase the impact and visibility of EU external action, including through the Team Europe initiatives, Global Gateway strategy and other actions implemented in a Team Europe approach to address global challenges. The Council encourages the Commission services and the EEAS to continue underpinning these efforts with up-to-date impact data. The Council welcomes the organisation of political missions in a Team Europe approach to contribute to the visibility of the EU and its Member States as a credible and trustworthy partner for development.
