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WORKING PAPER

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CONTRIBUTION

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Asia-Oceania Working Party
Subject:	Draft Council Conclusions - A Globally Connected Europe - FI comments

Delegations will find attached comments from Finland on the above.

04/06/2021, Helsinki

Finland would like to thank for the Draft Council Conclusions on Globally Connected Europe (WK 7260/2021 INIT), the introduction in COASI meeting on 3 June 2021 and the opportunity to comment. Finland is pleased to submit the following comments. Changes are indicated in ***bold italic***.

1. The Council recalls the 2018 Joint Communication “Connecting Europe and Asia – Building blocks for an EU Strategy” and its following Conclusions, which lay down the **fundamental principles of the EU’s approach to connectivity, ensuring** environmental, social, economic and fiscal sustainability, **covering comprehensively transport, energy, digital and human dimensions of connectivity**, and **following a rules-based** approach, **while** affirming the importance of both hard and soft **aspects of connectivity and the need for a level playing field for businesses**. The Council also notes that connectivity has been identified as a key component in **numerous EU regional strategies**.¹

Justification:

Paraphrasing the principles of the 2018 Joint Communication in more correct form and including the sectors of connectivity, which are not mentioned in the current draft.

1a. (new) The Council considers that a strategic approach to connectivity and financing of infrastructure in third countries has an important foreign and security policy, geo-strategic, development policy, climate policy and geo-economic dimensions. The need for global connectivity investment is significant, in particular in developing and emerging markets, and creates significant commercial opportunities for European businesses. Connectivity investments can contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the Paris Agreement and green transition goals. The EU needs to articulate its own approach to global connectivity, based on the application of these principles globally, and invest in connectivity to promote its values and interests, including through partnerships with likeminded countries and regions. The European Financial Architecture for Development is an essential enabler of connectivity investment and its strengthening a prerequisite for success.

Justification:

The draft currently lacks the rationale of why it is necessary to act and how to do it. The latest EFAD conclusions (June 2021) also refer to connectivity.

2. The Council considers that connectivity has an important role to play in **contributing to the Commission’s priorities** for 2019-2024, notably the European Green Deal and the European Digital Agenda, **through the use of the financial means and incentives provided by the Global Europe instrument and, in particular, the European Sustainable Development Fund+**. In this context, the Council **further** recalls its Data Gateway Declaration as well as the Joint Communications “2030 Digital Compass”, the Updated Industrial Strategy, Trade Policy Review, Sustainable and Smart Mobility

Strategy and the Global Approach to Research and Innovation, which all share the general objective of promoting the Union's values and interests externally, including through sustainable connectivity.

Justification:

Neither Global Europe nor the EFSD+ are mentioned in the text, while they are essential elements in the financing of sustainable connectivity and mobilizing private investment. Sustainable connectivity is mentioned in the regulation text numerous times.

6. The Council highlights the importance of bolstering the benefits of connectivity through **Connectivity Partnerships** with like-minded partners and in cooperation with countries benefitting from connectivity actions, in order to promote the sustainability and compatibility of the partners' respective activities and to benefit from complementarities in project preparation, implementation and financing, as well as policy and regulatory cooperation and technical assistance. The Council welcomes the EU's partnerships with Japan (September 2019) and India (May 2021), as well as the EU's commitment in December 2020 to strengthen practical connectivity cooperation with ASEAN, **and looks forward to deepening trans-Atlantic cooperation and cooperation within the G7 and G20 on connectivity.**

Justification:

Trans-Atlantic cooperation and cooperation with G7 are not currently mentioned in the text.

11. The Council **invites the Commission and the High Representative to start work to this effect through the preparation of a Joint Communication on an EU Strategy on a Globally Connected Europe and its presentation by the end of the first quarter of 2022 and will revert to the question at that time.**

Justification:

Self-explanatory.
