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PRESS RELEASE

3334th Council meeting

General Affairs

Brussels, 29 September 2014

President **Sandro Gozi**
State Secretary for European Affairs of Italy

P R E S S

Main results of the Council

*The Council prepared the ground for the **October European Council** by examining a draft agenda. The European Council of 23-24 October is expected to take a decision on the new climate and energy policy framework, to discuss the economic situation in Europe and to address pressing international issues.*

"In order to reach a deal in October, further work needs to be done on pending issues, and in particular on burden sharing. However, delegations confirmed the objective of reaching an ambitious agreement on the climate and energy package", said Sandro Gozi, State Secretary for European Affairs of Italy and President of the Council.

*As a follow-up to the June European Council the Council examined the implementation of the initiatives taken in the last two years **to foster growth, jobs and competitiveness** in Europe and discussed how to accelerate the implementation of these measures.*

"This is a new exercise launched by the Italian Presidency aimed at better ensuring the evaluation and more effective implementation of the European Council conclusions", added State Secretary Gozi. "Today, on the basis of a report provided by the Presidency, we had a first discussion focused on jobs, growth and competitiveness, which was also helpful with a view to the Conference on Employment at the level of Heads of State or Government to be held in Milano on October 8. The discussions today will also help the preparation of the discussion at the October European Council. Following a series of monthly debates, at the end of our Presidency, we will submit a comprehensive report on the first phase of the implementation of the strategic agenda".

*The Council adopted conclusions concerning the **EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region**.*

"The conclusions adopted today by the Council pave the way for the endorsement of the macro-regional strategy by the October European Council", added State Secretary Sandro Gozi. "As one of the priorities of the Italian Presidency, the strategy will provide new tools to foster cooperation in areas such as the maritime economy, preserving the marine environment, completing transport and energy links and boosting sustainable tourism at a regional level, for the benefits of 70 million citizens."

The Presidency also briefed the Council on the outcomes of the first meeting of the "Friends of the Presidency Group" on improving of the functioning of the EU, held on 25 September.

Furthermore, the Council adopted, without discussion, the following acts and decisions:

- *two regulations on the **statute and funding of European political parties and their affiliated foundations**;*
- *the delay of the provisional application of the **free-trade agreement with Ukraine**;*
- *a broadening of the mandate of the European Union **rule of law mission in Kosovo**;*
- *a directive setting out new **transparency rules on social responsibility for large companies**;*
- *a directive on **building up minimum infrastructure for alternative fuels across the EU**;*
- *a regulation on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of **invasive alien species**.*

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
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ITEMS DEBATED

European Council

– Preparation for October European Council

The Council discussed a draft annotated agenda, drawn up by the President of the European Council in cooperation with the presidency and the Commission, for the European Council meeting to be held on 23 and 24 October ([12780/14](#)).

The October European Council will focus on:

- Climate and energy; the objective is to take a final decision on the new climate and energy policy framework. All member states stressed the importance of reaching an agreement, in line with the conclusions of the June European Council. Several of them considered that further efforts were needed, in particular on the questions of energy security, interconnections, burden sharing and flexibility mechanisms, in order to achieve that objective.
- Economic issues; the European Council will discuss the economic situation in the EU on the basis of a presentation by the Commission and work undertaken by the Council. The discussion made it clear that investments are key to stimulating growth and the creation of jobs.
- Other items; specific external relations issues may be addressed in the light of developments.

The annotated draft agenda will serve as the basis for draft conclusions, to be prepared in the run-up to the meeting.

– Follow-up to June European Council

In a follow-up to the June European Council the Council took stock of the strategic agenda focusing on the chapter on jobs, growth and competitiveness and discussed how to better implement European Council conclusions concerning the first pillar of the strategic agenda.

The discussion was based on a presidency report ([13244/14](#)) which reviews progress in the past two years since the Compact for Growth and Jobs was adopted. Ministers gave their assessment of where we stand and what can be done to improve or accelerate implementation.

The implementation discussion is a new exercise launched by the presidency which at the July General Affairs Council proposed to improve the follow-up to European Council orientations and to focus it on the priorities set out in the strategic agenda adopted in June. The idea is to complement the comprehensive implementation reports that are published every six months, and which cover all sectors, by issuing monthly reports that focus on a specific pillar of the strategic agenda.

EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region

The Council adopted conclusions on the Commission communication on the EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region ([10675/14](#)) set out in [13503/14](#).

A macro-regional strategy is an integrated framework to address common challenges in a given geographical area where both member states and third countries are located. The objective is to strengthen cooperation in order to achieve economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region is aimed at helping the eight participating countries (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia) to strengthen their cooperation for the benefit of 70 million citizens. The cooperation areas include promoting the maritime economy, preserving the marine environment, completing transport and energy links and boosting sustainable tourism.

The EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region is expected to be endorsed by the European Council on 23-24 October. This would be the EU's third macro-regional strategy, following the strategy for the Baltic Sea region (2009) and the EU strategy for the Danube region (2011).

Any other business

– Improving the functioning of the EU

The presidency briefed the Council on the first meeting of the Friends of the Presidency Group on improving the functioning of the EU, which took place on 25 September 2014.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**GENERAL AFFAIRS****Statute and funding of European political parties***

The Council adopted new rules on the statute and funding of European political parties, following a first-reading agreement reached with the European Parliament. The rules include a regulation aimed at helping European political parties and their affiliated political foundations to play their role of expressing the political will of EU citizens ([PE-CONS 62/14 + 13274/14 ADD 1 REV 2](#))¹ and a regulation adjusting the financial regulation to the specific needs of European political parties ([PE-CONS 68/14 + 13273/14 ADD 1](#))².

For details see press release [13652/14](#).

Adjustment of the Council's rules of procedure to the new rules of qualified majority

The Council adopted a decision adjusting its rules of procedure to the new rules for the calculation of a qualified majority which, pursuant to Article 238(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, apply as from 1 November 2014. As from this date, a system of double majority of members of the Council or the European Council and of population will replace the current rules, which are based on a system of weighted votes.

When acting on a proposal from the Commission or the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy a qualified majority will require the support of at least 55% of the member states (i.e. in the EU of 28, at least 16 member states) representing at least 65% of the EU population (i.e. in 2014 around 328.6 million).

Until 31 March 2017, when an act is to be adopted by the Council acting by qualified majority, a member of the Council may request that it be adopted in accordance with the rules on majority voting in force before 1 November 2014.

For details, see [factsheet](#).

¹ The Netherlands and UK delegations voted against and the Belgian delegation abstained.

² The Netherlands and UK delegations voted against.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EU-Ukraine Association Agreement

The Council amended the timetable for the provisional application of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. For more details, see press release and the joint statement by the Council and the Commission.

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

EULEX Kosovo

The Council broadened the mandate of the European Union rule of law mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo). For details, see press release.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

EU-Nigeria agenda on migration and mobility

The Council confirmed the agreement regarding the joint declaration on a Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the European Union and its member states. The Common Agenda is the new framework which the EU and its member states may use alongside existing frameworks, in particular the mobility partnerships, to develop cooperation in the area of migration with relevant partner countries¹.

The Joint declaration is expected to be signed by Nigeria and, on the EU side, the Commission and the Presidency in the near future.

¹ See also Commission communication: "Global Approach to Migration and Mobility" ([17254/11](#))

Jordan-EU mobility partnership

The Council confirmed the agreement regarding the joint declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the European Union and its participating member states, in the framework of the implementation of the EU Global Approach to Migration ¹. Mobility partnerships are established in those cases where they can bring added value both to the EU and the third country concerned as regards the management of migration flows.

The Joint Declaration was signed by Jordan and the twelve member states which had expressed their intention to join the mobility partnership, as well as by the European Commission, in the margins of the JHA Council on 9-10 October 2014.

Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

The Council decided not to object to the adoption of a Commission delegated regulation ([12349/14](#)) laying down information and publicity measures for the public and information measures for beneficiaries, pursuant to regulation 514/2014 laying down general provisions on the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and on the instrument for financial support for police cooperation, preventing and combating crime, and crisis management ²

The Commission regulation sets out minimum measures needed to inform potential beneficiaries about the financing opportunities offered jointly by the Union and member states through the national programmes. This will ensure that information on possible funding opportunities is disseminated widely to all interested parties thus also promoting transparency.

The Commission regulation is subject to the so called regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the delegated act will be published and enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

¹ [17254/11](#).

² [OJ L 150, 20.5.2014, p. 112](#).

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Own funds requirement

The Council decided not to object to the adoption by the Commission of a regulation on the calculation of the own funds requirements for firms with limited authorisation based on the fixed overheads.

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. The act can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

TRADE POLICY

Derivative contracts in trade repositories - Opening of talks with third parties

The Council adopted a decision authorising the opening of negotiations and adopting negotiating directives for bilateral agreements with Australia, Brazil, Canada, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa and the United States on mutual access to, and exchange of information on, derivative contracts held in trade repositories.

TAXATION

Heating fuel - Italy

The Council adopted a decision authorising Italy to apply reduced rates of taxation to gas oil and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) used for heating purposes in certain particularly disadvantaged areas under article 19 of directive 2003/96/EC.

The measure is aimed at partially offsetting the disproportionately high heating costs for residents in certain geographical areas, such as Sardinia and small islands.

The derogation will apply from 1 January 2013 until 31 December 2018. It extends an earlier decision which expired on 31 December 2012.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**Landlocked developing countries**

The Council adopted the following conclusions outlining the EU's key objectives and priorities for the 2nd UN conference on landlocked developing countries, which is to take place in Vienna on 3-5 November 2014:

- "1. The EU and its Member States (hereafter the EU) welcome the comprehensive 10-year review conference on the 'Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries' which will be held in Vienna, Austria, on 3-5 November 2014.
2. The EU considers that the focus for this LLDC conference should remain on LLDC's core areas of interest, including trade, transport, regional integration, investment and development, based on good governance principles and internationally agreed standards. The EU looks forward to open, productive and outcome-oriented discussions in view of establishing the LLDC Programme of Action for the following ten years. The EU emphasises that this future work programme should build on, and take into account, lessons learned from the Almaty Programme of Action (2004), as well as contribute to inclusive growth and sustainable development in its environmental, social and economic dimensions.
3. The EU firmly believes that the conference and the new Programme of Action should focus on a select number of key challenges that are common to many LLDC and of strategic importance for their development opportunities.
 - (a) Trade facilitation: The EU considers that open markets and reducing the barriers to trade are essential to enhancing inclusive growth and sustainable development. The EU, together with other partners, will continue to support trade facilitation in the context of its development policy as well as through the provision of targeted Aid for Trade. The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) approved in Bali (2013) is of particular relevance to LLDCs. The EU is committed to continue providing developing countries with technical assistance in order to help them to implement TF reforms.

- (b) Aid for Trade: The EU collectively accounts for one third of all global Aid for Trade. The EU is committed to promoting the integration of the LLDCs into the multilateral trading system; providing continued preferential market access for LDCs and countries most in need; working towards inclusive growth and sustainable development; and developing more tailored, results based and coordinated Aid for Trade. The EU also stresses the importance of the new Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) regulation which entered into force on 1 January 2014. The GSP Rules of Origin are very favourable to LDCs.
- (c) Regional integration and cooperation: Regional integration is intended to help enlarge regional market size, reduce the cost of inputs, enhance competitiveness and connectivity and help attract new Foreign Direct Investment. Coordinated multilateral action is crucial to ensure that regional initiatives on transit and trade facilitation achieve impact taking into account interests of all riparian countries engaged in concrete projects and initiatives. The EU supports regional cooperation efforts and welcomes the creation of networks to address energy dependency, which is a major source of economic vulnerability for many LLDCs. These countries will also continue to benefit from EU support for the implementation of the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative.
- (d) Trade infrastructure including transportation: The EU notes that more diverse infrastructure networks play a significant role for growth performance in LLDCs. Existing infrastructure gaps and administrative inefficiencies remain critical bottlenecks that hinder economic growth in LLDCs. Enhanced interconnectivity between places of production and points of export and import is therefore essential. Furthermore, transportation of passengers and especially agricultural goods to markets helps reduce poverty and is an enabling factor for universal access to health and educational services mostly available in cities. As required investments are considerable and public finance will not suffice, the private sector can play a critical role to bridge this gap and blending can be used as a financing tool to encourage private sector participation. There is need for considering questions of social, ecological and labour standards in investment relations in order to achieve a fair and sustainable balance between all stakeholders involved.
- (e) Economic diversification: The EU strongly supports the efforts of LLDCs to create and maintain a sound macroeconomic environment, to identify and build upon comparative advantages in productive and potential future promising sectors and diversify their economies. The process of diversification will require investment in infrastructure, supportive policy, institutional capacity (legal and regulatory framework), education, including vocational training and a dynamic private sector. The EU remains committed to help developing countries to eliminate restrictions to international trade; to explore options for structural transformation by diversifying their exports and attracting foreign investments; and to improve their productive capacities; and to strengthen state capacities for steering sound economic policy and sustainable development.

4. The EU is fully engaged in the current work towards a new post-2015 development agenda. The Council recalls its Conclusions of June 2013 on the Overarching Post-2015 Agenda. In this context, the EU looks forward to ensuring that the partnership with the LLDCs evolves coherently with the commitments that will be made in the post-2015 framework."

COMPANY LAW

Disclosure of non-financial and diversity information by large companies*

The Council adopted a directive for the disclosure of non-financial and diversity information by certain large companies ([PE-CONS 47/14](#) and [13265/14 ADD 1](#)).

New measures will require certain big EU companies to draw up, on a yearly basis, a statement relating to environmental, social and employee-related matters, respect for human rights, anti-corruption and bribery matters. The statement will have to include a description of the policies, outcomes and the risks related to those matters.

Where a company does not pursue policies in relation to these matters, it will have to explain why this is the case.

The new measures are aimed at strengthening the company's transparency and accountability, while limiting any undue administrative burden, and ensuring a level playing field across the EU.

For more information see *press release* [13606/14](#).

ENVIRONMENT

Invasive alien species*

The Council adopted a regulation on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species ([PE-CONS 70/14, 13266/14 ADD 1](#)).

The regulation lays down rules to prevent, minimise and mitigate the adverse impacts of the introduction and spread, both intentional and unintentional, of invasive alien species on biodiversity and the related ecosystem services, as well as other economic and social impacts.

Invasive alien species are species that are initially transported outside their natural range across ecological barriers, through human action, and then survive, reproduce and spread and have negative impacts on the ecology of their new location as well as serious economic and social consequences. It has been estimated that, of the 12 000 or so alien species that are found in the European environment, between 10 % and 15 % have reproduced and spread, causing environmental, economic and social damage. They are estimated to cost the EU at least EUR 12 billion per year.

See press release [13630/14](#).

TRANSPORT

Alternative fuels infrastructure*

The Council adopted a directive on building up minimum infrastructure for alternative fuels across the EU ([PE-CONS 79/14](#); statements: [13267/14 ADD 1](#)).

Under the directive, each member state will draw up an alternative fuel deployment strategy or "national policy framework", which will set out the country's national targets for putting in place new recharge and refuelling points for the different types of "clean fuel", such as electricity, hydrogen and natural gas, as well as relevant supporting actions.

Together, the policy frameworks of all member states will provide long-term security for private and public investment in vehicle and fuel technology and infrastructure roll-out.

Increased use of clean fuels is expected to reduce dependence on oil for transport and cut down its greenhouse gas emissions. The expansion of new technologies should promote economic growth and job creation in the EU, in particular in small and medium-sized enterprises.

For details, see press release [13660/14](#).

TELECOMS

Union for the Mediterranean: ministerial meeting on the digital economy

The Council adopted a position of the EU and its member states on the draft declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean ministerial meeting on the digital economy. This meeting will be held on 30 September 2014 in Brussels.

AGRICULTURE

Feedingstuffs - Particular nutritional purposes

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending directive 2008/38/EC¹ establishing a list of intended uses of animal feedingstuffs for particular nutritional purposes ([11839/14](#)).

The Commission received applications to add to or modify several particular nutritional purposes listed in the annex to directive 2008/38/EC. After assessing the dossiers included in those applications, the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health acknowledged that the specific composition of the feeds concerned fulfilled the particular nutritional purposes intended and had no adverse effects on animal health, human health, the environment or animal welfare. The applications are therefore valid and the list should therefore be amended accordingly.

This Commission regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the regulation, unless the European Parliament objects.

¹ Commission Directive 2008/38/EC of 5 March 2008 establishing a list of intended uses of animal feedingstuffs for particular nutritional purposes ([OJ L 62, 6.3.2008, p. 9](#)).

Pesticides - maximum residue levels

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of three Commission regulations amending annexes II, III, IV and V to regulation 396/2005¹ as regards:

- maximum residue levels for asulam, cyanamide, dicloran, flumioxazin, flupyrsulfuron-methyl, picolinafen and propisochlor in or on certain products (amendment of annexes II, III and V) ([12379/14](#));
- maximum residue levels for amitrole, dinocap, fipronil, flufenacet, pendimethalin, propyzamide, and pyridate in or on certain products (amendment of annexes II and III) ([12392/14](#));
- maximum residue levels for anthraquinone, benfluralin, bentazone, bromoxynil, chlorothalonil, famoxadone, imazamox, methyl bromide, propanil and sulphuric acid in or on certain products (amendment of annexes II, III, IV and V) ([12459/14](#)).

Regulation 396/2005 establishes the maximum quantities of pesticide residues permitted in products of animal or vegetable origin intended for human or animal consumption. These maximum residue levels (MRLs) include, on the one hand, MRLs which are specific to particular foodstuffs intended for human or animal consumption and, on the other, a general limit which applies where no specific MRL has been set. MRL applications are submitted to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) which issue a scientific opinion on each intended new MRL. Based on EFSA's opinion, the Commission proposes a regulation such as those listed above to establish a new MRL or to amend or remove an existing MRL and modifying the annexes of regulation 396/2005 accordingly.

These Commission regulations are subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the regulation, unless the European Parliament objects.

¹ [OJ L 70, 16.3.2005, p. 1.](#)

Pesticides - transitional measures

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of Commission regulation amending regulation 283/2013¹ as regards the transitional measures applying to procedures concerning plant protection products ([7305/14](#)).

Commission regulation 283/2013 laid down new data requirements for active substances. In order to permit member states and the interested parties to prepare themselves to meet those new requirements, those regulation sets transitional measures concerning submission of data.

Those transitional measures need to be amended in order to allow data concerning the active substances to be submitted, in certain cases, in accordance with the requirements in force at the time of their initial approval or renewal. The reason for this change is to preserve a uniform and harmonized approach to the assessment of those data through their evaluation at EU level.

This Commission regulations is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the regulation, unless the European Parliament objects.

CUSTOMS UNION

Convention on the International Transport of goods (TIR carnets)

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be adopted, on behalf of the European Union, on a proposal to amend the Customs Convention on the International Transport of goods under cover of TIR carnets (TIR Convention 1975) ([13015/14](#)).

¹ Commission Regulation (EU) No 283/2013 of 1 March 2013 setting out the data requirements for active substances, in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market ([OJ L 93, 3.4.2013, p. 1](#)).

APPOINTMENTS

European Economic and Social Committee - Committee of the Regions

The Council appointed Mr Michal Grzegorz MODRZEJEWSKI (Poland) as a member of the European Economic and Social Committee for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 20 September 2015 ([13404/14](#)).

The Council appointed Mr Bruno BOURG-BROC, Mr Michel DELEBARRE and Ms Françoise MESNARD (France), as members of the Committee of the Regions for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 25 January 2015 ([13407/14](#)).
