



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Conclusions on Rio+20: Outcome and follow-up to the UNCSD 2012 Summit

*3194th ENVIRONMENT Council meeting
Luxembourg, 25 October 2012*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"RECALLING the European Council Conclusions of 1-2 March 2012¹ and the Council Conclusions of 11 October 2011 on Rio+20: towards achieving sustainable development by greening the economy and improving governance² and 9 March 2012 on Rio+20: Pathways to a sustainable future³ and REAFFIRMING the positions expressed therein;

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. WELCOMES the agreement reached by Heads of Governments and high-level representatives at the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012 and the agreed outcome document "The Future We Want" which constitutes a sound basis for further work in the ongoing quest for achieving sustainable development, globally, regionally, nationally and locally;
2. WELCOMES that Rio+20 reaffirmed that poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are the overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development;

¹ Doc. EUCO 4/12 (paragraph 28).

² Doc. 15388/11.

³ Doc. 7514/12.

P R E S S

3. REAFFIRMS the undiminished resolve of the EU and its Member States to an ambitious follow up to Rio+20 and to set in motion actions and initiatives to move forward and fully operationalize and implement all the commitments in “The Future We Want” at EU and Member States level, in particular through the European Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS), which therefore should be reviewed as soon as possible, at the latest in 2014, taking into account the communication to be adopted by the Commission in the first quarter of 2013, as well as through the Europe 2020 Strategy and by building bridges, engaging partners and building stronger alliances at regional and international level;
4. STRESSES the need to consider and review, as deemed necessary and on a case by case basis, all other relevant EU and national policies, strategies and programmes, and to implement through them the Rio+20 outcomes;
5. WELCOMES the registry of commitments for sustainable development launched at Rio+20 and ENCOURAGES all stakeholders to voluntarily take actions to promote sustainable development and poverty eradication and to contribute to the full implementation of the Rio+20 outcome;
6. UNDERLINES that sustainable development comprises on an equal footing its three interlinked dimensions (environmental, social and economic) bound by a cross-sectoral institutional approach for its effective governance and therefore EXPRESSES its commitment to continue addressing issues pertaining to the Rio+20 outcome and its follow-up process in a comprehensive, balanced, coordinated and coherent manner across all related policy areas, including the interlinkages between them; and STRESSES the need to enhance coherence and coordination with the post-2015/MDG process;
7. REAFFIRMS its support for an open and inclusive follow-up process allowing the full and active participation of all major groups and other stakeholders, and STRESSES the importance of the strong involvement of the civil society as a whole, the private sector, trade unions and local authorities, in the follow-up of Rio+20 and the implementation of its outcome;
8. REITERATES the importance of human rights, democracy, peace and security, health and social equity, the rule of law and good governance as well as of gender equality and women’s empowerment, including equal economic, social and political participation, for achieving sustainable development; in this context, STRESSES the importance of promoting social cohesion, social inclusion, full and productive employment, decent work for all and social protection and RECOGNISES the need to support active public involvement and empowerment of civil society through strengthened institutional arrangements at all levels and initiatives aiming at enhancing social security and implementing social protection floors;
9. REAFFIRMS the need to respect planetary boundaries to guide decision-making for securing a safe operational space for humanity;

10. UNDERLINES the need for the integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems as a prerequisite for economic, social and human development and as a means to enhance resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges; in this regard, UNDERLINES further the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services and their valuation;

Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication (GESDPE)

11. WELCOMES the agreement at Rio+20 that an inclusive green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication is one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development, and that it will enhance our ability to manage natural resources sustainably, increase resource efficiency and reduce waste; REAFFIRMS its commitment to pursue a just, global transition to an inclusive green economy in collaboration with other international partners;
12. WELCOMES that many countries, including developing countries, have already initiated green economy processes, as green economy can provide win-win opportunities and contribute to poverty eradication and to freeing humanity from hunger;
13. STRESSES the importance of private and public sector engagement in promoting green economy in the context of sustainable development including through public-private partnerships; ENCOURAGES public authorities to put in place the necessary enabling frameworks and tools; SUPPORTS the development of international standards and voluntary initiatives undertaken by business and industry such as corporate social responsibility and corporate sustainability reporting; in that context, CALLS for the early development of a common global framework for corporate sustainability reporting and EMPHASIZES the need to further encourage businesses and industry to adopt corporate social responsibility policies;
14. UNDERLINES the urgent need for EU Member States, independently and in cooperation, to further enhance the capacity of educational systems to provide people, particularly youth and women, with the related skills to pursue green economy as a means to achieve sustainable development;
15. STRESSES the need to further develop science-based and rigorous methods of measuring growth, natural wealth and social well-being; CALLS ON the UN Statistical Commission to launch the programme of work on broader measures of progress towards sustainability to complement GDP; and CALLS for long-standing cooperation in this field with the relevant organisations and agencies;
16. UNDERLINES the need to build on the directions envisaged in the “Europe 2020” Strategy and the Resource Efficiency Roadmap and the need to pursue the use of appropriate indicators already developed, and where necessary to agree on the development of a set of interlinked indicators that complement GDP, to be applied at international, EU and Member State levels, as appropriate, particularly addressing, among others, resource depletion, environmental degradation, health, socio-economic inequalities and social marginalisation; CALLS on the Commission to submit in a timely manner its foreseen communication on a follow-up of “GDP and beyond”;

Institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD)

17. WELCOMES the agreement on the establishment of a High -Level Political Forum (HLPF) that will enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in a holistic and cross-sectoral manner at all levels; UNDERLINES that the EU and its Member States are fully engaged to play an active role in this process; STRESSES the need to ensure added value and avoid duplication with existing structures; and HIGHLIGHTS that the HLPF should serve as a dynamic platform for sustainable development within the UN system, directly linked with ECOSOC, and working at a higher political level (UNGA) at regular intervals;
18. LOOKS FORWARD to the report of the UNSG on the needs of future generations, and to consider the options included therein, including as appropriate the appointment of a High-Level Representative on sustainable development and future generations;
19. LOOKS FORWARD to the adoption during the 67th Session of the UNGA of a Resolution implementing the political agreement achieved at Rio on the strengthening and upgrading of UNEP, inter alia by establishing universal membership in the Governing Council, by having secure, stable, adequate and increased financial resources from the regular budget of the UN and voluntary contributions, by enhancing UNEP's voice and ability to fulfil its coordination mandate within the UN system, by promoting a strong science-policy interface and by ensuring the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, and HIGHLIGHTS that this outcome can positively contribute to ensure that UNEP delivers its functions as the leading global environmental authority;
20. REAFFIRMS the need for enhancing synergies among MEAs and enhance coordination and cooperation among them, including through UNEP, while respecting the independent legal status and mandates of the MEAs;
21. REAFFIRMS its commitment regarding the strengthening and upgrading of UNEP and CONSIDERS that the Rio+20 outcome is a significant step in the direction of upgrading UNEP into a specialized UN agency for the environment based in Nairobi;
22. UNDERSCORES that sustainable development requires the meaningful involvement of all parts of civil society as well as national, sub-national and local authorities; and ENCOURAGES their active participation, as appropriate, in decision-making, planning and implementation of policies and programs for sustainable development at all levels;
23. NOTES that negotiations on the HLPF will provide an opportunity to consider the status of the EU within the forum, including the appropriate and effective participation modalities there, taking into account the current EU status in the CSD, and that the process of enhancing and upgrading UNEP will also provide an opportunity to review the status of the EU within the organization, including the appropriate and effective participation modalities of the EU in the Governing Council of UNEP; in this context, WILL CONTINUE ADDRESSING these issues in due course;

Framework for action and follow-up

24. WELCOMES the agreement on necessary action in a significant number of thematic areas and cross-sectoral issues identified under the framework for action and follow-up and the commitments that have been secured and UNDERLINES the strong determination of the EU and its Member States to take concrete and urgent actions and initiatives to fully implement such commitments at international, EU and national level in all thematic areas and cross-sectoral issues addressed in the Rio+20 outcome document such as on water, energy, food security and nutrition;
25. REAFFIRMS its commitment to the promotion of full and productive employment, decent work for all, with particular attention to the young and women, as well as inclusive social protection;
26. STRESSES the determination of the EU and its Member States to take an active part at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) to implement the commitments agreed at Rio+20, including:
 - to take a decision, before the end of the 69th Session of the UNGA, on the development of an international instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction; in this context, REAFFIRMS its strong determination to continue pursuing the launching, as soon as possible, of the negotiations under UNGA for an UNCLOS implementing agreement to this end;
 - to adopt a resolution at the 67th Session of the UNGA determining the modalities of the Third International Conference on SIDS, to be convened in 2014; in this context, STRESSES the need to effectively address, on a collaborative and urgent basis, the vulnerability of SIDS with regard to climate change impacts by increasing their resilience and adaptation capacities; and
 - to take a decision by the 67th Session of the UNGA to designate a UN Member State body to take any necessary steps towards the full, effective and timely operationalization of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10-YFP on SCP) adopted at Rio+20; in this context, STRESSES that the 10-YFP contains decisions on SCP agreed at the global level that should be implemented as soon as possible in the coming years, and REAFFIRMS its determination to work for its successful implementation;
27. UNDERLINES the fundamental importance of tackling climate change, ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss, desertification, land degradation, drought and water-related issues in achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication; in this context, WELCOMES the recognition afforded to these issues and their interlinkages in the Rio+20 outcome document and the positive outcomes from the CBD Conference in Hyderabad, and looks forward to positive outcomes from the UNFCCC Conference in Doha and the forthcoming UNCCD Conference;

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

28. UNDERLINES the strong determination of the EU and its Member States to constructively take part in the process to develop global SDGs; such SDGs should be coherent with and integrated in the UN development agenda beyond 2015 with a view to an overarching framework for post-2015, without deviating efforts from the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015; in this respect, STRESSES the need to effectively coordinate the work for SDGs development and for defining the post-2015 development agenda, including the work of the Post-2015 UNSG High Level Panel; and REAFFIRMS that the formulation of SDGs should also be coherent with existing internationally agreed goals and targets such as on biodiversity, climate change, social protection floors and others;
29. CONSIDERS that the SDGs should address and incorporate the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced, holistic, coherent and synergistic way, while capturing inter-linkages and cross-cutting issues; RECOGNISES that SDGs should be focused on priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development, being guided by the Rio+20 outcome document and mindful of the position of the EU and its Member States on such areas in the context of Rio+20; and UNDERLINES the need to start an inclusive elaboration process on defining key priority areas from an EU and Member States perspective, taking also into account proposals by other partners;
30. STRESSES that, while taking into account different national circumstances, policies, priorities, capacities and levels of development, the SDGs should be global in nature and universally applicable to all countries, limited in number, action-oriented, easy to communicate and linked to concrete targets and indicators;
31. LOOKS FORWARD to the establishment of an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on SDGs that is open to all stakeholders and to the constitution of the related open working group thereafter; EMPHASISES that the work of developing the SDGs throughout its different stages, should be informed by research-based evidence and expert analysis and inputs from the broadest possible range of stakeholders; and LOOKS FORWARD to the input and support from the UN system to be ensured by the UNSG, which will provide an essential contribution to the process;

Means of implementation (MoI)

32. NOTES the agreement on the establishment, at the 67th Session of the UNGA, of an intergovernmental process to prepare a report proposing options on an effective sustainable development financing strategy to facilitate the mobilization of resources and their effective use, and UNDERLINES the EU and its Member States' readiness to engage in a constructive way in the above process;
33. UNDERLINES the need for coherence, coordination and non-duplication of efforts with regard to the Financing for Development process; EXPRESSES its support for an integrated approach to the various MoI aspects of the Rio+20, the post-2015 development agenda and other relevant processes, given that the potential financing sources are the same, and HIGHLIGHTS the importance of addressing in a comprehensive manner the various strands relating to finance and technology transfer, including those undertaken in the context of climate change, biodiversity and desertification;

34. REAFFIRMS the shared principles, common goals and differential commitments as set out in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation; UNDERLINES that resources for the implementation of sustainable development policies have to be mobilised by all types of stakeholders and come from all sources, national and international, public and private as well as financial and non-financial actions; in this respect, STRESSES the key role of domestic resources, UNDERSCORES the importance of Official Development Assistance (ODA), particularly in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and countries in situations of fragility, and its catalytic role including for the leveraging of private funds; and HIGHLIGHTS the importance of innovative financing and of South-South and triangular cooperation, thus reflecting the role of emerging economies as partners of developing countries;
 35. HIGHLIGHTS in this respect the importance of using effective regulation, market-based mechanisms, including fiscal measures, internalization of external and notably environmental costs, other economic instruments, and the gradual elimination of environmentally harmful subsidies that are incompatible with sustainable development, including for fossil fuels, so as to provide drivers for innovation, investments, jobs and protection of the environment, whilst protecting the vulnerable groups in society;
 36. TAKES NOTE of the report prepared by the UNSG for the 67th UNGA, on options for a facilitation mechanism that promotes the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies; in this context, REAFFIRMS its commitment to the promotion of clean and environmentally sound technologies as a means to facilitate a transition to green economy for all countries regardless of their development status as well as its commitment to support cooperation and capacity building for developing countries, and RECALLS that the EU research framework programmes are open to third countries and that the EU will further cooperate with developing countries through its new programme for research and innovation “Horizon 2020” to promote sustainable development;
 37. RENEWS its political commitment to move towards sustainable development and the resolve of the EU and its Member States to contribute to the common global challenge, push for the ambitious implementation of what has been agreed at Rio +20, and ensure effective action for sustainable development, inclusive green economy and poverty eradication."
-