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3284th Council meeting

Environment

Brussels, 13 December 2013

President **Valentinas Mazuronis**
Minister for the Environment of Lithuania

P R E S S

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Main results of the Council

CO2 emissions from maritime transport

Ministers discussed a draft regulation for setting up a system to monitor, report and verify CO2 emissions from maritime transport. The President of the Council, Valentinas Mazuronis, explained that discussions had focused on "the scope of this important legislative act, the balance between the necessary level playing-field and possible flexibility in order to reduce the administrative burden".

Invasive alien species

The Council held a public policy debate on a draft regulation on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species, with the objective of steering further work in Council preparatory bodies.

* * *

Without discussion, the Council adopted a regulation establishing an ***instrument for nuclear safety cooperation*** *and two regulations on Union support for* ***nuclear decommissioning*** *assistance programmes respectively in Bulgaria and Slovakia as well as in Lithuania, covering the period 2014-2020.*

The Council adopted a decision amending the decision establishing the European joint undertaking for ***ITER*** *(called "Fusion for Energy") in order to provide a better basis for the financing of the activities of this joint undertaking for the period 2014-2020.*

The Council also authorised the Commission to negotiate with Switzerland on Swiss participation in the ***Erasmus+*** *programme for education, training, youth and sport.*

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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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PARTICIPANTS

Belgium:	
Ms Joke SCHAUVLIEGE	Flemish Minister for the Environment, Nature and Culture
Bulgaria:	
Ms Iskra MIHAYLOVA-KOPAROVA	Minister for the Environment and Water
Czech Republic:	
Ms Radka BUČILOVÁ	Deputy Minister for the Environment
Denmark:	
Ms Ida AUKEN	Minister for the Environment
Mr Martin LIDEGAARD	Minister for Climate, Energy and Building
Germany:	
Ms Ursula HEINEN-ESSER	Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Reactor Safety
Estonia:	
Ms Keit PENTUS-ROSIMANNUS	Minister for the Environment
Ireland:	
Mr Phil HOGAN	Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government
Mr Jimmy DEENIHAN	Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Greece:	
Mr Ioannis MANIATIS	Minister for the Environment, Energy and Climate Change
Spain:	
Mr Federico RAMOS DE ARMAS	State Secretary for the Environment
France:	
Mr Alexis DUTERTRE	Deputy Permanent Representative
Croatia	
Mr Hrvoje DOKOZA	Deputy Minister for the Protection of the Environment and Nature
Italy:	
Mr Marco PERONACI	Deputy Permanent Representative
Cyprus:	
Mr Nicos KOUYIALIS	Minister for Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment
Latvia:	
Mr Aleksandrs ANTONOVS	State Secretary, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
Lithuania:	
Mr Valentinas MAZURONIS	Minister for the Environment
Luxembourg:	
Ms Carole DIESCHBOURG	Minister for the Environment, Climate, Water and Land Management
Hungary:	
Mr Imre Attila HORVÁTH	Secretary of State, Ministry of National Development
Malta:	
Mr Leo BRINCAT	Minister for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change
Netherlands:	
Ms Wilma MANSVELD	Minister for Infrastructure and the Environment
Austria:	
Mr Harald GÜNTHER	Deputy Permanent Representative
Poland:	
Mr Maciej GRABOWSKI	Minister for the Environment

Portugal:	
Mr Jorge MOREIRA DA SILVA	Minister for the Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy
Romania:	
Ms Anne JUGANARU	Secretary of State, Ministry for the Environment and Climate Change
Slovenia:	
Ms Andreja JERINA	State Secretary for the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment
Slovakia:	
Mr Ján ILAVSKÝ	State Secretary at the Ministry of the Environment
Finland:	
Mr Ville NIINISTÖ	Minister for the Environment
Sweden:	
Mr Anders FLANKING	State Secretary, Ministry of the Environment
United Kingdom:	
Mr Owen PATERSON	Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Mr Paul WHEELHOUSE	Minister for Environment and Climate change
Mr Alun DAVIES	Minister for Natural Resources and Food

Commission:	
Ms Connie HEDEGAARD	Member
Mr Janez POTOČNIK	Member

ITEMS DEBATED

CO2 emissions from maritime transport

Ministers discussed a draft regulation setting up a system to monitor, report and verify CO2 emissions from maritime transport.

Ministers expressed their opinions in particular on the scope of the proposal and considered whether the harmonised system for monitoring and reporting carbon dioxide emissions from maritime transport, introduced by the proposed regulation, strikes the right balance between ensuring a minimum level playing-field and allowing the necessary flexibility while minimising administrative burden. Ministers also confirmed that the main objective remained to achieve an agreement at global level.

The Commission presented its legislative proposal (*11851/13*) in July 2013. Its purpose is to ensure that greenhouse gas emissions from ships are monitored and reported as the first step of a staged approach to reducing these emissions. The proposed measure focuses on CO2 emissions, which represent about 98% of the greenhouse gas emissions caused by the shipping sector. It would apply to all ships above 5000 gross tons, which account for around 55% of the ships calling into Union ports and represent around 90% of the related emissions.

Emissions for each ship would be calculated, in particular, on a per-voyage and an annual basis based on ship-specific fuel consumption and fuel type. Other parameters to be taken into account include data on fuel consumption, distance travelled and cargo carried.

The EU system for monitoring, reporting and verifying those emissions should then serve as an example for the creation and implementation of a global system in the context of the International Maritime Organisation.

On the European Parliament side, the vote in the ENVI Committee is scheduled for January 2014 and the plenary session for April 2014.

Invasive alien species

The Council had a public policy debate on a draft regulation on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species, with the objective of steering further work in Council preparatory bodies.

Ministers were invited to answer two questions suggested by the presidency (*16432/1/13*). The first focused on the list of invasive alien species and the second question concerned possibility to act at the level of EU bio-geographic regions.

The presidency highlighted some elements emerging from discussions, in particular: the need for an efficient system at EU level to combat invasive alien species; the need to review some of the features of the list of such species (their number and origin); the importance of regional cooperation as an important element to ensure an efficient fight against invasive alien species. The presidency will analyse the views expressed today together with the incoming Greek presidency and use them to make further progress on this dossier.

Invasive alien species are species that are initially transported through human action outside of their natural range across ecological barriers, and that then survive, reproduce and spread, and that have negative impacts on the ecology of their new location as well as serious economic and social consequences. It has been estimated that out of more than 12 000 alien species that are found in the European environment, 10 to 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.

The Commission proposal (*13457/13*), presented in September 2013, aims to establish a framework for action to prevent, minimise and mitigate the adverse impact of invasive alien species on biodiversity and ecosystem services. In addition, it will limit social and economic damage. To achieve these objectives it envisages the following measures: prevention of the intentional and unintentional introduction and release into the environment of invasive alien species; setting up of an early warning and rapid response system; and management of the spread of these species throughout the EU.

The Parliament's ENVI committee vote is scheduled for February 2014 and vote in plenary for March 2014.

Other business

– ***Indirect land-use change***

The presidency briefed ministers on the outcome of the previous day's TTE (Energy) Council which examined a presidency compromise text (*16546/13*) on a draft directive on indirect land-use change (ILUC) amending the fuel quality (98/70/EC) and renewable energy (2009/28/EC) directives.

However, there are still some outstanding issues and it was not possible to reach a political agreement at this stage. Therefore, the Council's preparatory bodies have been invited to work further on the proposal, with a view to allowing for a political agreement to be reached in the future.

– ***Warsaw Climate Conference***

The Council took note of the information provided by the Polish Conference of the Parties Presidency and the Commission on the outcome of the Warsaw Climate Conference that took place on 11-22 November 2013 (*17640/13*).

– ***Aviation emissions trading***

The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission on the latest developments at the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and in the EU emissions trading system (ETS) for aviation and was briefed by the presidency on the latest state of play and the way forward (*17457/13*).

In October, the ICAO General Assembly agreed to develop a global market-based measure (MBM) to limit $C0_2$ emissions from international aviation. This measure is expected to be agreed on in 2016 and implemented as of 2020. The EU will contribute actively to this work and offer expertise and resources. The ICAO Council in November agreed that work on some technical elements should start immediately.

Following the ICAO Assembly, the Commission submitted a legislative proposal to adapt the EU ETS directive to the new situation and to replace the "Stop the clock" decision with appropriate measures. The proposal is designed to take into account the ICAO's work on a global measure and to follow the ICAO timetable.

– ***Plastic carrier bags***

The Commission informed ministers of its proposal for a directive to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags (*15845/13*). Several ministers spoke in support of the proposal and outlined the efforts already being undertaken at national level to deal with the issue. Some ministers considered that the proposal could be more ambitious, mentioning the need to define a target for reduction at EU level.

The proposal is a response to the discussion which took place at the Environment Council in March 2011, when the Commission was invited to analyse possible action against plastic bag consumption. Its objective is to limit negative impacts of plasti carrier bags' littering on the environment, to encourage waste prevention and a more efficient use of resources, while limiting negative socio-economic impacts. The proposal aims in particular at reducing the consumption of plastic carrier bags with a thickness of below 50 microns (0.05 milimeters), as these are less frequently reused than thicker ones. According to the Commission, in 2010, over 8 billion plastic carrier bags were discarded as litter in the European Union. They accumulate in the environment, in particular in the form of marine litter. Once discarded, plastic carrier bags can last for hundreds of years before being totally degraded.

– ***Work programme of the incoming presidency***

The Greek delegation presented the incoming presidency's work programme for the environment sector. It will focus in particular on the following legislative proposals: a draft directive to adapt the EU ETS aviation directive , draft regulations on shipment of waste and also on CO2 emissions from maritime transport and a draft regulation on invasive alien species.

The informal ministers' meeting will take place on 14-15 May 2014 and the Environment Council on 3 March 2014 in Brussels and on 12 June 2014 in Luxembourg.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

ENVIRONMENT

Water Convention

The Council adopted a decision on the acceptance on behalf of the EU of the amendment to Articles 25 and 26 of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) to allow all United Nations member states to accede to the Convention.

The Convention is intended to establish a framework for bilateral and multilateral cooperation to prevent and control the pollution of transboundary watercourses and to ensure the rational use of water resources in the member countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

For more details see the Convention's website .

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Instrument for nuclear safety cooperation

The Council today adopted a regulation establishing an instrument for nuclear safety cooperation (*16737/13*).

Under the new instrument, the Union will finance measures to support the promotion of a high level of nuclear safety, radiation protection, and the application of efficient and effective safeguards for nuclear material in third countries. A total of EUR 225 321 000 has been set aside for the implementation of this regulation for the period 2014-2020.

For more information see press release *17548/13*.

Nuclear decommissioning assistance programmes in Bulgaria, Slovakia and Lithuania

The Council today adopted two regulations on Union support for nuclear decommissioning assistance programmes respectively in Bulgaria and Slovakia as well as in Lithuania, covering the period 2014-2020 (*16635/13*,*16635/13 COR 1*, *16633/13*, *16633/13 COR 1*).

For more information see press release *17550/13*.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Restrictive measures against Syria

The Council adopted several amendments to EU restrictive measures against Syria. It permitted the import or transport of chemical weapons or related material from Syria into the EU if such movements are in support of the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons.

In addition, the Council prohibited the import and export of cultural property and items of archaeological, cultural and religious importance, which have been illegally removed from Syria since the outbreak of the crisis.

Finally, the Council took steps to require that where frozen funds or economic resources are unfrozen to provide humanitarian assistance, this will be done to ensure the maximum humanitarian benefit and safeguard against the risk of misuse by releasing these to the United Nations for delivery of assistance in Syria under the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP). 179 persons and 54 entities associated with the repression in Syria currently have their assets frozen in the EU.

RESEARCH

ITER experimental reactor: joint undertaking "Fusion for Energy"

The Council adopted a decision amending the decision establishing the European joint undertaking for ITER (called "Fusion for Energy") in order to provide a better basis for the financing of the activities of this joint undertaking for the period 2014-2020 *(16372/13)*.

The new decision will enable the transfer of funds from the Commission to Fusion for Energy for the European contribution to the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) without the requirements specific to research programmes.

The European Council conclusions of 7-8 February 2013 stated that ITER will be financed under the EU general budget for 2014-2020 and not through the Euratom research and training programmes.

Differently from what has been done under the Seventh Framework Programme for research (2007-13), the proposal is not designed as a research programme under Article 7 of the Euratom Treaty. It is instead based on Article 47 and refers to the participation of Euratom in the financing of the joint undertaking.

ITER is a first-of-a-kind global collaboration project to build and operate an experimental reactor with the aim of demonstrating the scientific and technological feasibility of fusion energy for peaceful purposes. Europe, as the main contributor -providing around 45% of the whole investment- has a particular responsibility to make ITER a success.

Further information on ITER:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/energy/euratom/index_en.cfm?pg=fusion&section=iter

EDUCATION

Participation of the Swiss Confederation in Erasmus+ programme

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations, on behalf of the Union, on a bilateral agreement between the European Union and the Swiss Confederation on Swiss participation in the Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth and sport, on the basis of the negotiating directives set out by the Council.

The new Erasmus+ programme will enter into force in January 2014 and has a total budget of about EUR 14.7 billion. It brings together in a single programme activities previously covered by a number of separate programmes (including the Lifelong Learning Programme, Erasmus Mundus and Youth in Action) and it also includes activities in the new area of European competence, sport.

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to documents

On 13 December 2013, the Council approved:

the replies to confirmatory applications

– No 23/c/01/13 (*16150/13*);

– No 24/c/01/13 (*16795/13*).