

ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

Luxembourg, 15 June 2015

The Council will start at 10:00, chaired by the Latvian minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Kaspars Gerhards. The Commission will be represented by Commissioners Miguel Arias Cañete and Karmenu Vella.

During the meeting, the Council will hold a policy debate on the proposed directive for the reduction of **national emissions of certain pollutants** (NEC Directive). This directive, which is part of the "Clean Air Programme for Europe", reviews the existing requirements on emission ceilings in order to address the remaining health risks and environmental impacts posed by air pollution.

Ministers will also discuss the preparations for the **UN Climate Change conference** that will take place in Paris in December, looking at some key issues in international negotiations, taking into account the Commission's communication "The Paris Protocol - A blueprint for tackling global climate change beyond 2020" and the state of play of the international climate change negotiations.

Over lunch ministers will continue their exchange of views on international **climate change** issues.

Press conference: at the end of the formal part of the meeting +/- 14.15

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

National emissions of certain pollutants (NEC Directive)

Ministers will hold a policy debate on the proposed directive for the reduction of national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants. ([18167/13](#)) Air pollution is the most significant environmental cause of death in the EU, leading to 400 000 premature deaths each year.

This proposed directive is part of the "Clean Air Programme for Europe". It reviews and replaces the existing requirements on the annual capping of national emissions of air pollutants contained in the previous NEC directive (Directive 2001/81/EC).

The aim is to move towards the air quality related objectives set out in the [7th Environment Action Programme \(EAP\)](#) to ensure that by 2020 outdoor air quality in the EU has significantly improved and is closer to the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended levels.

The review addresses other health risks and environmental effects caused by air pollution and aligns EU law with new international commitments for 2020 (following the revision of the Gothenburg Protocol in 2012).

In addition, the proposal sets out new reduction commitments of air pollutants for 2030.

To guide the debate, the presidency has prepared two questions ([9247/15](#)):

Building on the results of the Council' s debate in June 2014 where a stepwise approach towards the 2030 horizon, with the contribution of all sectors, was supported, what are the main difficulties in attaining the 2030 horizon as updated?

With a view to the lead target to reduce by 50% the number of premature deaths in the EU, what additional elements, if any, could be explored in order to elaborate solutions for the 2030 horizon which are both realistic and ambitious?

The outcome of the debate will feed into the preparation of the Council's common position with a view to future negotiations with the European Parliament.

The road to Paris

The Council will take stock of preparations for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change conference to be held in Paris in December 2015 (COP 21).

The aim of the Paris Conference is to adopt a legally-binding agreement (Paris agreement) to be implemented from 2020, preferably in the form of a new protocol that will be applicable to all and will ensure that the global temperature increase stays below 2°C relative to pre-industrial levels.

The European Union expects that the agreement in Paris will *inter alia* contain a long-term global emission reduction goal, ensure a review of the mitigation commitments every 5 years, strengthen transparency and accountability, focusing on capacity-building and investment.

In this context, ministers will exchange their views on some key issues under international climate negotiations, taking into account the Commission's communication "The Paris Protocol - A blueprint for tackling global climate change beyond 2020" as well as the state of play of international climate change negotiations (latest being the session of 1-11 June, Bonn, Germany).

The debate will be guided by the following questions proposed by the presidency:

As far as the legal framework and architecture of the post-2020 climate regime - including the transformation from intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) into nationally determined contributions (NDCs) - are concerned, how best to ensure universal participation and the highest possible level of ambition in the Paris Agreement?

How do you see the dynamic nature of the Paris Agreement capable of strengthening its level of ambition over time? What should be the arrangements for a review cycle in order to ensure the durability of the Protocol and keep the 2°C objective within reach? In this context, how to address calls from other Parties for dynamism with regard to other elements than mitigation?

On the basis of the discussion during this Council meeting, a first draft of Council conclusions setting out the position of the EU and its member states in view of the Paris conference will be prepared. The Council (Environment) is expected to adopt those conclusions at its meeting on 18 September 2015.

Other business

Market stability reserve

The Presidency will provide information on the provisional agreement on the decision to establish a market stability reserve for the EU greenhouse gas emission trading scheme (ETS).

[Press release on the agreement on the market stability reserve, 13/05/2015](#)

Recent international meetings

The Commission and the Presidency will report to the ministers on several recent international environmental conferences:

Triple Conference of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (Geneva, 4-15 May 2015)

12th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Punta del Este, Uruguay, 1-9 June 2015)

Investment plan

The Commission will inform ministers of the funding possibilities that will become available for environmental projects once the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) is operational.

[Press release on the agreement on rules for the EFSI, 28/05/2015](#)

The Lisbon Charter

Ministers will be informed by the Portuguese delegation about the Lisbon Charter, a guide for public policy and regulation of drinking water supply, sanitation and wastewater management services.

Work programme of the incoming Presidency

The Luxembourg delegation will present its work programme in the area of environment.
