

ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

Brussels 6 March 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 Vice-President Šefčovič and Commissioners Vella, Arias Cañete and Mimica.

Ministers will discuss the preparations for the **UN Climate Change conference** that will take place in Paris in December. The aim of the conference is to adopt an ambitious, legally binding global agreement to be implemented from 2020, in replacement of the Kyoto Protocol.

The Council will also address climate change issues of the **Energy Union**, following the recent Commission communication on the subject.

The Council will have an exchange of views on environment related aspects of the **Annual Growth Survey** with a view to the mid-term review of Europe 2020 strategy.

Furthermore, ministers will have an exchange of views on the latest developments and prospects concerning the negotiations on the **post-2015 agenda**.

Over lunch ministers will exchange views with the European Environment Agency on the findings of its recent report "The European environment - state and outlook 2015"

Press conference: at the end of the meeting +/- 18:00

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Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery on: www.eucouncil.tv

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

UNFCCC Climate Change conference

Ministers will discuss the preparations for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change conference in Paris in December 2015 on the basis of the Commission's recent communication "[The Paris Protocol - A blueprint for tackling global climate change beyond 2020](#)" and the outcome of Geneva Climate Change Conference in February. The aim of the Paris conference is to adopt an ambitious, legally binding global agreement to be implemented from 2020.

Ministers are also expected to adopt the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) of the EU and its member states as agreed at the UNFCCC Warsaw Conference (11-22 November 2013) which invited all Parties to initiate or intensify domestic preparations for their INDC and to communicate them well in advance of the Paris Conference (by the first quarter of 2015 by those Parties ready to do so)

The [European Council of October 2014](#) adopted the EU's [2030 climate and energy framework](#), setting out a binding, economy-wide reduction target, covering all sectors and all sources of emissions, including agriculture, forestry and other land use.

It also decided that the INDC of the EU and its member states would be submitted at the latest by the first quarter of 2015, in order to facilitate the clarity, transparency and understanding of the intended contributions.

The EU and its member states are committed to a binding target of an at least 40% domestic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990, to be fulfilled jointly.

The EU and its member states are of the view that their INDC represents a significant progression beyond its 20% emission reduction commitment by 2020 compared to 1990. It is in line with the EU objective, in the context of necessary reductions according to the IPCC by developed countries as a group, to reduce its emissions by 80-95% by 2050 compared to 1990. Furthermore, it is consistent with the need for at least halving global emissions by 2050 compared to 1990.

For further details: [Tackling climate change](#)

Energy Union

Ministers will have a first exchange of views on the climate policy aspects of the [Commission communication on the Energy Union](#), building on the outcome of the [Riga conference of 6 February](#), which launched the Riga process.

The debate will provide an opportunity to reflect on further synergies between the energy and climate policies. In order to structure the debate, the Presidency proposed the following question (6225/15):

- How can decarbonisation measures contribute to the creation of an Energy Union with a forward looking climate policy?

The general aim of the communication is to provide a coherent approach across different policy areas in order to provide a coordinated response to the challenges of climate change, energy security and competitiveness.

It also seeks to contribute to the attainment of the [EU's 2030 climate and energy goals](#) agreed by the European Council in October 2014.

The Commission communication comes in response to a call from the European Council of December 2014 to present a comprehensive energy union proposal.

It includes a chapter on governance and it's developed around five main areas:

- energy security, solidarity and trust
- internal energy market
- moderation of energy demand through energy efficiency
- decarbonisation of the economy
- research, innovation and competitiveness

In June 2014, the European Council established "[Strategic agenda for the Union in times of change](#)" with energy and climate policies being one of its five building blocks, focusing on affordable energy for companies and citizens, secure energy for all countries, and green energy.

The energy union is also one of the key priorities identified in President Juncker's political guidelines, and in the Commission's work programme for 2015.

EU energy ministers will discuss the Commission communication on 5 March 2015. The presidency intends to summarize the debates of both Councils in a single letter which will provide a comprehensive input to the President of the European Council ahead of the March meeting of heads of states and government.

Greening the European Semester

Ministers will have an exchange of views on environment related aspects of the [2015 Annual Growth Survey](#), which sets out what more can be done at EU level to help member states return to higher growth levels and make progress towards sustainable development.

The AGS notes that the EU and its member states must deal with a range of long-term challenges affecting job creation and growth, globalisation, productivity and technological developments, pressure on resources and environmental concerns, as well as generally weaker growth in emerging and developing countries.

In October 2014 the Environment Council agreed on priorities for greening the European Semester. The debate will provide an opportunity to assess the progress, as well as to discuss steps forward. Particular attention will be paid to synergies with the potential benefits from the digital agenda in terms of environmental protection and resource efficiency.

The debate will be framed by the following questions proposed by the Presidency ([6143/15](#)):

- Is the AGS 2015 setting the right framework to ensure that future growth and competitiveness will be sustainable and resource efficient, along the principles of the circular economy?
- How can European Union and member states tap the full potential of synergies between environmental policy and other policy fields, in particular economic and social policy, to move towards the resource efficient, circular and low carbon economy?
- Where could synergies be developed to promote green jobs, greater resource efficiency and the objectives of the circular economy, in the framework of the Digital Single Market Strategy and the resource efficiency agenda under the Europe 2020 Strategy?

The outcome of the debate will be summarized in a joint synthesis report as contribution to the March European Council meeting.

Post-2015 agenda

Ministers will have an exchange of views on the latest developments and prospects for the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, which should define the [new global partnership for poverty eradication and sustainable development](#), to be adopted at the UN General Assembly summit in September 2015. Agreement on the agenda will also have important implications for negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The post-2015 development agenda was one of the processes launched at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which was held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in June 2012, on the basis of the outcome document "[The Future We Want](#)"

It aims at eradicating poverty, achieving inclusive and sustainable development for present and future generations and ensuring the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental values as the basis for peaceful and prosperous societies.

The UN Secretary general published in December 2014 a synthesis report on the post-2015 Agenda "[The road to dignity by 2030: Ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet](#)".

The Commission communication in this field is the most recent contribution to the process, focusing on the issues of global partnership, finance for development, finance for sustainable development and means of implementation, monitoring and accountability. It is also intended to contribute both to the ongoing negotiations, as well as to the preparations for the 3rd International Conference on Finance for Development (Addis Ababa, July 2015).

Ministers are invited to reflect on the way forward on the basis of the following questions prepared by the Presidency (6168/15):

- How to ensure that we don't lose the good environmental elements of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals proposal and that the final post-2015 agenda outcome remains balanced?
- What can the high-level Environment actors (such as the EU Environment Ministers and UNEP) do in the run-up to the September post-2015 summit in order to contribute and facilitate this process?
- Bearing in mind the contribution of environmental goals and targets to the whole sustainable development agenda, how can we ensure that they receive adequate financing for their implementation?

Development ministers are also expected to discuss the post-2015 agenda, including on financing aspects, at their informal meeting to be held in Brussels on 12 March 2015.

Other business

- Enabling a global phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) under the Montreal Protocol
 - Information from the Commission
- Soil sealing - an ever increasing problem at European level
 - Information from the Austrian delegation
- Second Ministerial Conference on Environment and Renewable Energies of the Western Mediterranean Dialogue (Dialogue 5+5) (Lisbon, 2-3 March 2015)
 - Information from the Portuguese delegation