



COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION



Council Conclusions on Climate change: Towards a comprehensive EU adaptation strategy

*2953rd ENVIRONMENT Council meeting
Luxembourg, 25 June 2009*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council of the European Union,

1. RECALLS that the EU objective of keeping the global mean surface temperature increase below 2°C compared with pre-industrial levels requires urgent and ambitious mitigation action by all countries; UNDERLINES that adaptation is a necessary complement to mitigation; since significant impacts of climate change, such as the higher frequency and intensity of extreme events and changes in the hydrological cycle, are already being felt, RECOGNISES the importance of proactive adaptation to unavoidable climate change, in particular in the most vulnerable regions and groups within societies.
2. WELCOMES the Commission White Paper "Adapting to climate change: Towards a European Framework for action" as a basis for developing a more strategic approach towards adaptation, in line with the principle of subsidiarity; CONSIDERS that an initial phase up to 2012 should lay the foundations for a comprehensive EU adaptation strategy as from 2013.
3. UNDERLINES that climate change is already happening and that its impacts vary across sectors and by region and may add to differences within and outside the EU; UNDERLINES that climate change is affecting and will continue to affect all of society and will have an impact on a number of sectors, *inter alia* water resource and soil management, agriculture, food production, forests, fisheries, the energy sector, infrastructure and urban planning, spatial planning, tourism, human, animal and plant health, as well as ecosystems - including marine and coastal ecosystems - and biodiversity; STRESSES the need for a cross-sectoral approach in order to enhance synergies.

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4. EMPHASISES the need for increased action across all levels and by all relevant actors in order to address adaptation to climate change in the most effective way; in this context, UNDERLINES the importance of awareness raising; RECOGNISES that the impacts of climate change can vary considerably between localities, and that therefore most adaptation measures would need to be taken at national, regional and local level and should be based on the best practices and the specific circumstances of the Member States; STRESSES the need for an integrated approach at EU level to support and strengthen those measures, in particular where effective adaptation to climate change requires transboundary cooperation (e.g. in river and sea basin management), in sectors that are closely integrated at EU level through the single market and common policies, where added value can be generated by acting at regional level and to support synergies with actions on mitigation.
5. STRESSES that an EU Framework for Adaptation should be developed in order to improve the EU's resilience to deal with the impacts of climate change; in an initial phase up to 2012, the framework should focus on building a solid knowledge base, mainstreaming adaptation into all relevant policies, using a combination of policy instruments to ensure effective delivery of adaptation and stepping up international cooperation on adaptation. During a subsequent phase starting in 2013, a comprehensive EU adaptation strategy should be further developed and implemented, making use of EU legislation and policies, as part of an iterative process leading to the refinement of policies as more information becomes available.
6. UNDERLINES the need to improve knowledge management and data sharing on the likely impact of and vulnerability to climate change, the associated socio-economic aspects and the costs and benefits of different adaptation options, taking into account the specific circumstances, needs and best practices of the Member States; in this context, AGREES that the necessary steps should be taken to establish a Clearing House Mechanism in order to improve knowledge management; CALLS UPON the Commission to ensure the continuous participation of Member States in the concept and subsequent phases for such a Clearing House Mechanism which would contribute to the Shared Environmental Information System.
7. EMPHASISES the importance of mainstreaming adaptation into all relevant policies by increasing the resilience of *inter alia* health, regional development and social policies, agriculture, fisheries and forests, biodiversity, ecosystems, soil and water, coastal and marine areas, production systems, physical infrastructure and urban planning and spatial planning; STRESSES the need to improve the assessment of the impacts of climate change in all relevant sectors, recognising cross-sectoral relations, and to evaluate proposed measures in the light of interactions between sectors and with outside organisations; furthermore, RECOMMENDS that in each policy area changes in or refocusing of policies should be thoroughly analysed and assessed, including scientific, economic and social aspects, in order to increase resilience and facilitate sustainable adaptation, taking into account policies and measures being developed and implemented across all levels; HIGHLIGHTS the crucial importance of proper implementation of existing and future relevant policies in terms of adaptation to climate change; STRESSES the importance of improving the climate resilience of EU investments in large infrastructure projects.

8. In this context, TAKES NOTE of the Impact Assessment accompanying the White Paper, the Commission Staff Working Documents accompanying the White Paper – Adapting to climate change: the challenge for European agriculture and rural areas; Climate Change and Water, Coasts and Marine Issues and Human, Animal and Plant Health Impacts of Climate Change as well as the Commission communication “A Community approach on the Prevention of Natural and Man-Made Disasters”; EMPHASISES that these documents should provide a basis for ongoing and future work on adaptation.
9. UNDERLINES the need to pursue a significantly improved understanding of the role of communities and ecosystems in adaptation measures, with a view to building their resilience and adaptive capacity and generating additional economic and social benefits; in this regard, WELCOMES ongoing activities within the Convention on Biological Diversity; RECOGNISES the potential role of biodiversity, agriculture and forestry in increasing ecosystem resilience by providing green infrastructure; also RECOGNISES the role of sustainable forest management in reducing vulnerability of forests to climate change and TAKES NOTE of the Global Expert Panel Report of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests “Making Forests Fit for Climate Change”.
10. ENCOURAGES Member States, the Commission and stakeholders to undertake appraisal of adaptation costs and benefits for relevant policy areas so that they can be fully integrated into policy development and investment decisions; UNDERLINES the need to further examine potential innovative measures for adaptation, including funding; STRESSES the need to maximise the involvement of the private sector with a view to mobilising private sector activities and private investments; RECOGNISES the need to study the potential of insurance options to complement adaptation measures.
11. TAKES NOTE of the intention of the Commission to establish an Impact and Adaptation Steering Group (IASG) in order to advance the proposed EU Framework for Adaptation and enhance cooperation; UNDERLINES the importance of a transparent and efficient structure for involving Member States and the need to clearly define the objectives and the mandate of the IASG in close consultation with the Member States, thereby avoiding overlaps and a proliferation of working groups; PROPOSES that the IASG should guide the assessment of existing EU policies and the integration of adaptation into those policies, and should ensure that representatives of a variety of stakeholders are regularly consulted.
12. REAFFIRMS that EU external cooperation on adaptation should be significantly enhanced with a view to supporting efforts of neighbouring countries and developing countries, particularly the most vulnerable ones; in this context, RECALLS its March 2009 conclusions, in particular its proposal that the Copenhagen agreement provide a Framework for Action on Adaptation on the basis of an international partnership and solidarity; RECOGNISES that further financing from appropriate sources will be needed to cover the costs of adaptation in developing countries."