



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions

Contribution to the Spring European Council (13-14 March 2008)

*2856th ENVIRONMENT Council meeting
Brussels, 3 March 2008*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council of the European Union,

WELCOMES the Commission's Strategic report on the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs to launch the new cycle for 2008-2010 and in particular the attention paid to climate change, energy efficiency and renewable energy; URGES the Member States and the Commission to ensure a better coordination between the Lisbon and the EU Sustainable Development Strategies and to pay increased attention to environmental technologies, resource efficiency and biodiversity, as covered by Guideline 11, in the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy during the second cycle;

ENCOURAGES the Member States and the Commission to strengthen further the co-ordination of reform efforts under the Lisbon Strategy by considering adequate policy responses as part of the multilateral surveillance process in Council; STRESSES the importance of the further development and use of indicators as well as qualitative assessment of policies to capture progress towards common objectives in the Lisbon Strategy, such as energy and resource efficiency, renewable energy, eco-innovation as well as biodiversity; WELCOMES the emphasis in the Commission's proposal for a new Community Lisbon Programme placed on priority EU level action with a view to achieving the EU's objectives on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating an internal energy market, as well as the promotion of a sustainable industrial policy;

P R E S S

STRESSES the following priorities:

A. Climate Change and Energy

1. Strongly WELCOMES the outcome of the Bali Climate Conference, which launched an inclusive negotiating process to be concluded by December 2009 at the COP-15 Copenhagen Conference, with COP-14 at Poznań in December 2008 as its milestone; RECALLS that the resulting global and comprehensive post-2012 agreement will need to address the following elements: a shared vision for long-term cooperative action; operative components with regard to mitigation and adaptation; as well as frameworks to promote technology, investment and financial flows; STRESSES that the agreement should thus provide an effective and appropriate response to the challenges resulting from climate change highlighted by the IPCC's fourth assessment report and should bring about the necessary reductions consistent with the 2°C objective;
2. EMPHASISES that a shared vision which addresses our objectives for both climate change and sustainable development, including a global long-term goal for emission reductions, is essential in order to keep the ultimate objective of the Convention within reach; WELCOMES the commitment of both developed and developing countries as contained in the Bali Action Plan to do their fair share in the mitigation and adaptation challenge and STRESSES that adaptation requirements need to be integrated into all decision-making processes; REITERATES the EU's commitment to do more to mobilise finance and scale up technology cooperation to assist developing countries in tackling climate change; EMPHASISES that building a global carbon market and in general using more market-based instruments is instrumental to delivering finance for reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
3. UNDERLINES that putting the EU and its Member States on the path towards a low greenhouse gas emission economy while also enhancing the security of energy supply requires political, social and economic efforts to be shouldered by all, taking into account different capacities and capabilities, and IS CONVINCED that the resolve to deeply transform our economies should deliver new opportunities to underpin European competitiveness, growth and jobs across the EU pulling new and energy-efficient technologies into the market;
4. STRESSES that the EU will do its fair share of global mitigation efforts; in this context WELCOMES the presentation by the Commission of the set of legislative proposals contained in its comprehensive "Climate action and renewable energy package", designed to deliver the ambitious commitments for climate protection and renewable energies agreed by the European Council in March 2007; EMPHASISES that, in keeping with the political direction given by the European Council, comprehensive deliberations by the Council, working closely with the European Parliament, should result in an agreement on these proposals as a coherent package before the end of 2008 and consequently allow for their adoption within the current legislative term, at the latest early in 2009;
5. STRESSES that the following key principles developed by the Commission in its climate action and renewable energy package, building on those established by the European Council, should guide the translation of the European Council's decisions into policy measures, thereby demonstrating EU leadership and global responsibility that should foster an ambitious global and comprehensive post-2012 agreement:

- these measures should provide a basis to ensure that the greenhouse gas emission reduction and the renewables targets can be reached, giving the necessary impetus for change as well as certainty and ensuring environmental integrity, taking into account achievements accomplished;
 - the efforts required should be shared, based on principles that guarantee full fairness, transparency and solidarity among Member States, respecting the need for sustainable economic growth across the Community, and all sectors contributing, take account of Member States' different starting points, circumstances and potentials, and avoid market distortions;
 - cost-efficiency should be at the heart of the measures in order to maintain and strengthen competitiveness, allowing for sufficient flexibility for Member States in meeting their targets and without excessive costs to any of the Member States;
 - the measures should enable the EU to move beyond the 2020 horizon, in support of the necessary global emission reductions to at least 50% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels and in line with the European Council's reaffirmation that developed countries should continue to take the lead also with a view to collectively reducing their emissions by 60% to 80% by 2050 compared to 1990;
 - stepping up to the more ambitious 30% reduction as part of a global and comprehensive agreement, as set out in the European Council conclusions of March 2007, needs to be built in explicitly and in a balanced, transparent and equitable way, taking into account work under the Kyoto Protocol first commitment period;
6. RECOGNISES that, in a global context of competitive markets, the risk of carbon leakage is a concern in certain sectors particularly exposed to international competition, that needs to be analysed and addressed urgently in order for appropriate measures to be implemented in the event that other countries do not commit to taking adequate measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the context of an international agreement;
 7. WELCOMES the presentation by the Commission of its proposal on the EU ETS review, addressing the four key elements which were confirmed by the Council in its conclusions of 28 June 2007; RECALLS that the EU ETS forms an essential part of an integrated climate and energy policy and that the revised Directive should enhance the cost-effectiveness of the necessary emission reductions; furthermore STRESSES that it should enable the EU ETS to link to other mandatory emissions trading systems capping absolute emissions;
 8. CALLS FOR strengthening the use of flexibility mechanisms resulting from projects implemented in third countries which have concluded the international agreement;
 9. RECALLS that the objective of proposing a regulatory framework on carbon capture and storage (CCS), as presented by the Commission, is to ensure that this novel technology is deployed in an environmentally safe way, which will be demonstrated through projects, as agreed by the European Council in Spring 2007; INVITES the Commission to consider the potential role of chemical and other sequestration techniques in developing the future research agenda for energy technology;

10. STRESSES that, in accordance with the conclusions of the European Council of March 2007, the binding nature of the ambitious target for the use of biofuels in overall EU transport consumption to be introduced in a cost-efficient way is appropriate subject to production being sustainable, the fulfilment of effective sustainability criteria and second-generation biofuels becoming commercially available. Sustainability criteria could in the future also be considered for the use of other forms of biomass for energy;
11. UNDERLINES the importance of effective national support schemes for renewable energies and flexibility in achieving national renewable targets;
12. UNDERLINES the need for Community and Member States' source policy to increase energy efficiency and security of supply as key elements for achieving the EU's integrated climate and energy policy and sustainable economic development;
13. INVITES the Commission to continue to support Member States' efforts to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases through comprehensive and ambitious Community policies and measures;

B. Halting Biodiversity Loss

14. STRESSES the need to achieve greater synergies between climate change and biodiversity policies as a way to secure co-benefits, in particular by strengthening mutually supportive activities and measures with regard to climate change mitigation, including reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and adaptation, as well as with regard to the production and consumption of and trade in biofuels and biomass and associated concerns regarding conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems;
15. ENCOURAGES the Member States and the Commission to strengthen efforts aimed at halting biodiversity loss by 2010 also through the implementation of actions included in the Communication on Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010 – and Beyond, and in its Action Plan, as referred to in the Council conclusions of 18 December 2006; STRESSES that full implementation of the Natura 2000 network both on land and at sea is an essential step towards reaching this objective; URGES the Commission and the Member States to develop efficient and cost-effective policy means for integrating biodiversity concerns into policies and programmes of all relevant sectors, to ensure that further economic development does not take place at the expense of biodiversity and that biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides can continue to contribute to sustainable economic development; UNDERLINES the importance of engaging all actors, notably business, to protect biodiversity, and in this context RECALLS the need to further promote the EU Business and Biodiversity Initiative; STRESSES the importance of accompanying these actions with the implementation of the Communication strategy foreseen in the EU Action Plan which should include awareness raising activities targeted at different interest groups;

16. STRESSES the need to increase efforts to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss globally by 2010 and in this respect UNDERLINES the need for the 9th Conference of the Parties to the CBD to achieve ambitious, yet realistic results; CALLS for the provision of innovative mechanisms to mobilise resources from public and private sources at international and national level as a means to contribute to achieving the global 2010 target, and in this context CALLS UPON COP 9 to adopt a resource mobilisation strategy; REITERATES its commitment to completing the elaboration and negotiation of an international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit sharing at the earliest possible time before the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties;

C. Environmental technologies

17. UNDERLINES the importance of environmental technologies as one of the fastest growing markets and of eco-design and a life-cycle approach in supporting eco-innovation; RECALLING the need to integrate eco-innovation across all relevant policies so as to foster it rapidly on a broad scale and to provide new impetus to the Lisbon Strategy, STRESSES the value of environmental technologies in order to reduce pressure on environmental media, such as air, water, soil and biodiversity, and as a means to improve energy and resource efficiency, as increasing global demand for energy and resources puts ever greater pressure on the environment; WELCOMES the presentation of the Commission's Lead Market Initiative, in particular in areas such as sustainable construction, bio-based products, recycling and renewable energy sources, where the development of innovation-friendly markets and ambitious and dynamic environmental standards should facilitate or reinforce the global opportunities for European enterprises in environmental technologies;
18. RECOGNISES the impact the EU has on global environmental standards through ambitious legislation and targets and EMPHASISES the need to design environmental legislation to support eco-innovation;
19. RECOGNISES the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises for the EU economy as well as their significant impact on the environment and particular challenges related to increasing energy and resource efficiency; STRESSES their role in shifting Europe's economy to a more sustainable pathway;
20. EMPHASISES the importance of targeted actions, notably through the Environmental Technologies Action Plan, to encourage market take-up and mobilise financing for R&D, eco-innovations and environmental technologies, in particular in promising areas such as construction, food and drink, energy-efficient water-technologies, transport, recycling and waste water, fully drawing on the potential of lead markets, public procurement, dynamic performance requirements such as the top-runner approach, and considering environmental technology verification and other instruments;

D. Sustainable Consumption and Production

21. REITERATES that the promotion of sustainable consumption and production is one of the key challenges for the EU and that economic growth must be further decoupled from negative environmental impacts and must be achieved within the carrying capacity of ecosystems;
22. WELCOMES the Commission's intention to present a Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan and an Action Plan on Sustainable Industrial Policy as early as possible in 2008; EXPECTS the Action Plans to contain concrete objectives and actions such as reducing negative environmental impact by providing a framework for the design and introduction of new or improved products and establishing favourable market conditions for environmentally-friendly technologies, products and services, elements for setting targets to improve energy and resource efficiency, promoting continuous improvement of performance labelling schemes, improving existing economic instruments, promoting their wider use and mechanisms for their follow-up, enhancing internalisation of external costs, as well as promoting environmental management schemes and sustainable consumption and sustainable lifestyles;
23. INVITES the Commission to present its Communication on Green Public Procurement in 2008, and ENCOURAGES the Commission to explore different measures, including the possibility of setting targets, which should enable the EU and the Member States to reach the objective of fulfilling by 2010 an EU average level of Green Public Procurement equal to that currently achieved by the best performing Member States, and to establish a process involving the Member States for the identification of Green Public Procurement criteria and follow-up;
24. UNDERLINES the need for a more sustainable use of natural resources in the EU, in relation also to the impact of this resources use beyond our continent, as highlighted in the Council conclusions of 23 October 2006;

E. Better regulation

25. WELCOMES the second strategic review of the Better Regulation initiatives; REITERATES that further efforts are necessary to simplify and improve legislation where appropriate and to reduce unnecessary administrative burden, while respecting the Community *acquis*; UNDERLINES that efforts to reduce the administrative burden and simplify legislation at the EU and national level should deliver legislation that not only cuts unnecessary costs for business and others, but achieves environmental objectives more effectively through enabling streamlining of procedures for implementation and enforcement bodies; and therefore also CALLS on the Commission and the Member States to increase efforts to consider implementation measures in their impact assessment of new legislation, and to share best practice on implementation and enforcement; LOOKS FORWARD to upcoming further improvements to the Commission's Impact Assessments, in particular in relation to the analysis and quantification of (long-term) environmental impacts.