



COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
MAIN TOPICS FOR THE COMING FORTNIGHT¹

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¹ This document has been prepared under the sole responsibility of the Press Office.
Information may be subject to change, depending on further developments.

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For **video** coverage of Council sessions and **audiovisual** material, please see the following Council websites:

- <http://video.consilium.europa.eu> (live webcast of public deliberations, public debates and press conferences)

and

- <http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu> (audiovisual material available for download in broadcast quality)

For photo coverage: <http://consilium.europa.eu/photo>

Monday 15 March 2010

Climate change - follow-up to Copenhagen

The Environment Council will adopt conclusions on the follow-up to the Copenhagen climate conference (7-19 December 2009). Over lunch, ministers will in particular discuss the structure of the global negotiations with a view to a new international climate agreement.

In addition the Council will be briefed about preparations for the 16th conference of the parties (COP 16) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (29 November to 10 December in Cancún, Mexico) by the Mexican secretary of the environment and COP 16 president. The conference will be preceded by further UN negotiations, scheduled to take place from 9 to 11 April and from 31 May to 11 June in Bonn.

Background

The Copenhagen Accord - a political declaration negotiated during the conference - falls short of the EU's ambitious objective of securing a legally binding agreement that ensures that the average global temperature increase remains below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Notwithstanding, the EU considers it a first step towards a more ambitious agreement and remains fully committed to continuing to negotiate with other parties.

In a letter dated 28 January 2010, the EU and its member states expressed their willingness to be associated with the Copenhagen Accord. At the same time, the EU also submitted its 2020 greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets: the EU already has legislation in place that will ensure by 2020 a 20% cut in such emissions compared with 1990 levels. Furthermore, it maintains its conditional offer of a 30% reduction, provided there are comparable reductions by other developed countries and appropriate contributions by developing countries.

Further information

- Website of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC): <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>;
- Full text of the Copenhagen Accord: http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/application/pdf/cop15_cph_auv.pdf;
- EU letter to notify association with Copenhagen Accord: http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/application/pdf/europeanunioncphaccord_app1.pdf;
- Countries associated with the Copenhagen Accord and their emissions reduction targets: <http://unfccc.int/home/items/5262.php>

Event

Meeting of the Environment Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (10.00)

A press conference will take place at the end of the proceedings.

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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Monday 15 March 2010

CO₂ emissions limits for light vans

The Environment Council will discuss for the first time the proposed regulation setting CO₂ emissions standards for light commercial vehicles, which is of critical importance in the context of reducing greenhouse gases from sectors not covered by the EU emissions trading scheme. In public deliberation, ministers will be asked to comment on the suggested emissions limits, penalties and flexibility mechanisms.

Background

This draft regulation ([15317/09](#)), proposed last November, complements the regulation setting CO₂ emission limits for new passenger cars. The new text provides for a limit of 175g CO₂/km on the average carbon dioxide emissions from new light vans registered in the EU. This target applies to a small van of average mass while specific targets for individual vehicles vary according to their weight. The objective is to be achieved by car manufacturers' fleets in 2016, phased-in from 2014. The proposal also includes an emissions target for 2020, set at 135g CO₂/km. In order to provide manufacturers with incentives to invest in new technologies, they would have to pay a penalty if their fleet fails to meet the targets. Flexibility mechanisms include the possibility for manufacturers to join up to meet their emissions obligations.

Further information

- Regulation 443/2009 setting CO₂ emission limits for new passenger cars (*OJ L 140, 5.6.2009*);
- Council press release on climate-energy package (*8434/09*)

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Monday 15 March 2010

Protection of biodiversity

The Environment Council is expected to adopt conclusions on biodiversity that will set a new headline target for the protection of species within the EU until 2020 and define its vision for protecting biodiversity until 2050. The conclusions will also sketch out the EU position concerning biodiversity protection at global level.

Background

According to expert reports, more than a third of species assessed are facing extinction and an estimated 60 % of the earth's ecosystems have been degraded in the last 50 years. Such a loss of biodiversity has also a considerable economic impact as it weakens the functions ecosystems deliver for human societies, for instance as regards food and water, climate regulation or natural protection from floods and storms.

At the European Council in Göteborg in 2001, the EU set itself the objective of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. Despite the efforts undertaken, including an EU biodiversity action plan, there are clear indications that this target will not be met. The Commission points out that this is due, among other things, to incomplete implementation of nature protection laws and insufficient integration of biodiversity considerations into other policies. The Council, by adopting its conclusions, intends to give new impetus to action in this field.

At international level, discussions on the review of the UN convention on biological diversity (CBD) are currently under way in order to prepare the tenth conference of the parties to the CBD, scheduled in Japan from 18 to 29 October 2010.

Further information

- Commission communication: Options for an EU vision and target for biodiversity beyond 2010 ([5614/10](#))
- Council conclusions of December 2009 on international biodiversity beyond 2010 ([17785/09](#))
- Commission communication on the mid-term assessment of the EU Biodiversity Action Plan ([17473/08](#))

Event

Meeting of the Environment Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (10.00).

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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Tuesday 16 March 2010

Overview of the agenda of the ECOFIN Council

The Council will be called on to agree on a general approach regarding a draft directive on hedge fund and other alternative investment fund managers, as well as a draft directive on invoicing (VAT).

The Council will discuss implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact, in particular the follow-up to the notice served in February on Greece.

It will prepare the spring meeting of the European Council (25–26 March), focusing on conclusions on the EU 2020 strategy for growth and jobs, financial sector exit strategies and the financing of measures to tackle climate change.

The Council is also expected to adopt conclusions on budget guidelines for 2011.

In the margins of the Council, the following events will take place:

Monday 15 March

- Troika meeting with the European Parliament (14.00-15.00)
- Eurogroup meeting (17.00)

Event

Meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (starting with a ministerial breakfast at 09.00) - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels .

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

For full information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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Monday 22 and Tuesday 23 March 2010

Foreign Affairs Council - overview of the agenda

The Foreign Affairs Council, which will be chaired by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, is expected to discuss in particular Haiti and the Middle East Peace Process following the HR's visit to the region.

In the margins of the Council, the following events are due to take place:

Tuesday 23 March 2010

- EU-Israel Association Council
- Ministerial political dialogue with IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) - Horn of Africa
- EU-Council of Europe Quadripartite meeting

Event

Meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels on Monday 22 (10.00) and Tuesday 23 March.

A briefing will take place in the Council press room on Friday 19 March at 9.30 (tbc).

A press conference will take place at the end of the proceedings (around 15.30).

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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Monday 22 and Tuesday 23 March 2010

General Affairs Council - overview of the agenda

The General Affairs Council will prepare the Spring European Council meeting scheduled for 25 and 26 March, focusing on a draft of European Council conclusions.

The following event is also scheduled in the margins of the Council meeting:

- Association Council EU-Croatia

Further information

- Council website: <http://consilium.europa.eu/>
- European Council website: www.european-council.europa.eu/
- Spanish presidency website: www.eu2010.es/

Event

Meeting of the General Affairs Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels, on Monday 22 (16.00) and Tuesday 23 March.

The presidency will hold a briefing in the Council press room on Friday 19 March at 9.30.

A press conference will take place at the end of the proceedings.

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

Contacts

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Spanish presidency:

Ana De Miguel Langa, tel. + 32 476 460 723, ana.demiguel@reper.maec.es

Thursday 25 and Friday 26 March 2010

European Council

The Spring European Council, chaired by its President Herman Van Rompuy, will address mainly two topics, i.e. the new European strategy for jobs and growth and the follow-up to the Copenhagen conference on climate change.

The heads of state and government will be invited to agree on the general framework of the Union's new strategy for jobs and growth and in particular to finalise the governance of the strategy and agree on a limited number of EU-wide quantitative targets. In this context the European Council will take stock of ongoing efforts by the EU and Member states to tackle the current economic crisis.

As for the fight against climate change, the European Council will assess the state of work regarding the follow-up to the Copenhagen Conference, both as regards the international negotiation process and the Union's relations with its strategic partners.

Further information

- European Council on 10 and 11 December 2009, Presidency conclusions (EUCO 6/09)

Event

European Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels, 25- 26 March 2010.

A press conference by the President of the European Council is expected to take place on Thursday evening (+/- 22.30) and another at the end of the European Council proceedings on Friday, (+/- 13.00).

For full information concerning the meeting, including the media programme and media accreditation, see European Council section on: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu>

Contacts

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Agenda of the President of the European Council

(15 - 19 March 2010)

Tuesday 16 March

- meeting with Nika Gilauri, Prime Minister of the Republic of Georgia (17.00)
(press statement +/- 17.30)

Wednesday 17 March

- Speech on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the restoration of Lithuanian Independence, European Parliament, Yehudi Menuhin Space, Rue Wiertz, 60 Bruxelles (19.00)

Further information

For more information concerning President's agenda, please see:

[European Council - the president](#)

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OTHER EVENTS

16 - 18 March 2010 (Málaga, Spain):

- Informal meeting of ministers in charge of territorial policy
www.eu2010.es

25- 26 March 2010 (Valencia, Spain)

- Informal meeting of ministers for equality matters
www.eu2010.es
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