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The final Council meeting has been concluded and the priority issues have come to a conclusion. It is almost time for Spain to take over the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union. Below, there is a summary of the results achieved in central policy areas during the Swedish Presidency.

Climate change

The Presidency's objective was to ensure that the EU continued to take responsibility for combating climate change and to act in unison at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (COP15) in December. During the autumn a strong mandate was adopted in the run-up to the Copenhagen negotiations. This mandate included:

- * A long-term emissions target: to reduce EU greenhouse gas emissions by 80-95 percent by 2050 compared to 1990 levels.
- * A short and medium-term emissions target: for the EU to reduce emissions by at least 20 percent by 2020 and by 30 percent if other parties make sufficient reductions of their own.
- * Requirement for reduced emissions from international transport: Reductions of 10 percent for aviation and 20 percent for shipping are required by 2020 compared to 2005 levels. The EU believes that charges from aviation and shipping should be used to pay for measures in developing countries, not least in the poorest nations.
- * Requirement to stop rainforest destruction: destruction must be halved by 2020 and have ceased completely by 2030. The EU wishes to see decisions made in Copenhagen to stop devastation of the rainforest, support reforestation and promote sustainable forestry.
- * An agreement on the EU's contribution to climate funding: The EU has supported the estimated need for long-term financing of EUR 100 billion per year until 2020. The EU estimates the global need for fast-start financing of EUR 7 billion annually for the years 2010-2012. The EU and its Member States are ready to contribute with EUR 2.4 billion annually.

At the UNFCCC climate conference in Copenhagen (COP 15) a political agreement was reached, which was taken note of by the COP15. The EU had wished for a more ambitious result. The emission reduction commitments are too weak and there is no long term objective for emission reductions. Furthermore it remains open too how a legally binding agreement will be put in place. Among the positive aspects of the agreement are:

- * Reference to the 2 degree temperature target,

Outcomes of the Swedish EU Presidency

- * Commitments for funding of developing countries; actions with regard to climate change,
- * That leading and fast-growing development countries accepted to list commitments for actions and to report them in a transparent manner

Also, the EU and its MS acted in a coordinated manner and pushed for higher ambitions together with several African countries and small island states.

The economic crisis

The Presidency's aim was to ensure that the EU would emerge stronger from the current economic and financial crisis. During the autumn, we were to deal with the crisis, create better financial markets through improved supervision and regulation, and maintain order in public finances. During the Swedish Presidency the following has among other things been agreed:

- * Better and increased financial supervision: Powerful European institutions for financial supervision shall prevent the emergence of new crises and exercise cross-border supervision. A joint European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB) is being set up to monitor the stability of the financial system as a whole. Three new supervisory bodies on the micro level are being created at the same time: the European Banking Authority, the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority and the European Securities and Markets Authority.
- * End to inappropriate bonus culture: Member States have agreed on new binding European rules governing compensation systems in banks and investment firms. These promote accountability for the long-term healthy and sustainable development. They shall also guard against high-risk behaviours that can threaten the stability of the financial system.
- * New European rules on capital adequacy: These rules decrease the possibilities to re-sell risks and make the banks more resilient against losses in hard times. Thereby, they reduce the risk of households and businesses being adversely affected by a shortage of credit supply.
- * Finance policy exit strategy: As a result of the establishment of the Gothenburg Principles, a finance policy exit strategy on how to return to healthy public finances and the adoption of Excessive Deficit Procedures (EDP), the Presidency has established a process for the way forward.
- * Financial market exit strategy: There are now clear principles for the phasing-out of support measures for the financial markets. Through these strategies, healthy banks will have the right incentive for a return to a competitive market and other banks will have an incentive to come to grips with their shortcomings.
- * A new growth strategy for EU in 2020: The Presidency has paved the way for growth efforts over the next decade. The focus of future growth efforts shall be an eco-efficient economy, stronger competitiveness, increased investment in research and education, full employment and high level of labour supply, and long-term sustainable public finances.

The Lisbon Treaty

The Lisbon Treaty came into force on 1 December. An extensive amount of work by the Presidency on institutional issues has been put in along the way:

- * A new European Commission President: Jos  Manuel Barroso was re-elected as President of the

European Commission in September.

* Czech ratification: After the European Council on 29-30 October had given the Czech Republic clarification regarding the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the country's president, Vaclav Klaus, signed the Czech ratification.

* Key appointments: At an extra informal summit on 19 November, Herman van Rompuy was appointed Permanent President of the European Council for a period of two and a half years. Catherine Ashton was appointed High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy for a period of five years.

* Entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty: All preparations could be finalised for the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December.

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea

The Presidency has had the ambition to adopt a EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea which will lead to a cleaner sea and make the region more economically dynamic:

* Baltic Sea Strategy in place: Despite eight out of the nine Baltic-rim countries being EU Member States, there has been no strategy from the EU on how to increase growth in the region or on how to deal with the environmental threat to the Baltic Sea. The Baltic Sea Strategy is hence an important instrument in the efforts for a cleaner Baltic Sea and a competitive Baltic Sea region.

The Stockholm Programme

Based on the vision of a safer and more open Europe, in which individual rights are safeguarded, the Presidency's ambition was to adopt a programme in the area of justice, known as the Stockholm Programme. This programme will guide EU justice, police and migration cooperation over the next five years and highlights inter alia:

* Safeguarded integrity: The individual's integrity and right to privacy are more clearly in the spotlight.

* Greater legal security: Efforts to strengthen legal security for crime suspects and to protect personal data are being intensified.

* Greater cooperation: Cooperation among Member States to jointly combat serious cross-border crime, such as human trafficking and drug smuggling, is being strengthened.

* Asylum system ambition: In the area of migration, a clear position is being adopted on the creation by 2012 of a common asylum system that is both legally secure and efficient.

Enlargement

The continued enlargement process is of strategic importance. The objective of the Presidency was to secure continued progress.

* Agreement between Croatia and Slovenia: The Presidency assisted in the agreement between Croatia and Slovenia on arbitration proceedings for the border dispute between the two countries.

Outcomes of the Swedish EU Presidency

Croatia's accession negotiations are now entering their final stages and the Presidency hopes that on 21 December a number of areas for negotiation can be finalised.

* Turkey's negotiations are continuing: The review of Turkey's outstanding obligations with regard to application of the Ankara Protocol went ahead, taking into consideration the sensitive process of negotiation on Cyprus. The Presidency hopes that the environmental chapter for Turkey can be opened on 21 December.

* Applications being assessed: The European Council has decided to consider membership applications from Iceland, Albania and Montenegro when the European Commission presented its opinions. Iceland's application is likely to be considered at the beginning of the year so that negotiations can get underway during the spring.

* Interim agreement with Serbia: Serbia's interim agreement with the EU (on trade and trade-related issues) can start to be applied.

The EU as a global actor

The Presidency's aim was to strengthen the EU as a global actor with a clear agenda for peace, development, democracy and human rights. The ambition was to enhance the EU's ability to act in times of international crisis, strengthen cooperation with important partners and contribute to collaborative EU initiatives within both foreign and security policy and trade and development policy:

* Seven summits with countries outside the Union: South Africa, Brazil, the United States, India, China, Russia and Ukraine. In many cases, relations between the EU and each of these countries were strengthened. The climate was the main topic in every one of the seven summit meetings aimed at getting these countries up to speed prior to the world climate summit in Copenhagen.

* New European External Action Service (EEAS): The European Council on 29-30 October approved the Presidency's guidelines on the establishment of a European External Action Service. The report lays the foundation for the proposal to be presented by the High Representative.

* Eastern Partnership to be implemented: Implementation of the Eastern Partnership is underway and progress has been made.

* More detailed strategies on Afghanistan/Pakistan: The Presidency has drafted more detailed EU strategies on Afghanistan and Pakistan. Work to implement the strategies is ongoing.

Other important issues:

Employment and social issues

* Active labour market policies and active social security policies: The Presidency has emphasised the importance of encouraging and supporting people to enter or re-enter the labour market and to gain access to employment. Active labour market policies and active social security policies will benefit those furthest away from the labour market, regardless of the state of the economy. Work will continue through the EU's new strategy for growth and employment.

* Gender equality and growth: The Presidency has highlighted how gender equality can strengthen growth. This question will be important in the further work on the EU's new strategy for growth and employment. .

Outcomes of the Swedish EU Presidency

* Self-employed persons: A political agreement was reached on equal treatment of women and men who are self-employed workers/assisting spouses.

Education

* Increased focus on teachers' importance for European competitiveness: The presidency has raised questions concerning teachers' and school leaders' role for the quality in education and for competitiveness in Europe.

Development assistance

* Climate and development: Taking a medium to long-term perspective, development assistance ministers agreed on how development cooperation can incorporate climate change issues and how we can support partner countries in their efforts to reach consensus on how to achieve continued development and manage climate change.

* Development assistance efficiency: An operational framework has been adopted to help the EU live up to international undertakings made in Paris and Accra.

Trade issues

* Free trade agreement between the EU and South Korea: The Presidency has concluded negotiations on the free trade agreement between the EU and South Korea. The agreement will basically remove all customs tariffs and a number of other barriers to trade and investment between the two economies.

* Services directive and package for goods to be introduced on 1 January: Implementation of both these reform packages has been concluded during the Presidency. The services directive and the package for goods will make it easier and less expensive to trade in goods and services on the internal market.

Security policy, defence, civil crisis management

* Common and improved maritime surveillance: The Baltic Sea countries are pooling their various systems for maritime surveillance and recognised maritime pictures, both among agencies within the countries and among the countries themselves. This will enable us to manage civilian shipping, maritime safety, environmental issues and protection against crime and military threats in a better way.

* EU battlegroups given greater flexibility: The prerequisites have been created to be able to use EU battlegroups in a more flexible way outside the rapid response concept, which will enhance the EU's crisis management capabilities.

* Better civil-military cooperation: The EU's crisis management capabilities are being strengthened as a result of greater synergy of civil and military resources, directing them towards the same objectives.

Economic issues

* Less VAT fraud: General guidelines aimed at combating VAT fraud and providing Member States with the opportunity to introduce reverse tax liability for VAT on emission rights. The agreement will help

Member States to combat fraud in a more appropriate manner and hence improve the efficiency of the emissions trading market.

* New rules concerning tobacco taxation; the agreement means that member states can improve their prospects of achieving national health targets by increasing the minimum tax on cigarettes, The minimum taxes on cigarettes, cigarillos, and smoking-tobacco will also be increased. This will help reduce tobacco consumption.

Justice and home affairs issues

* Strengthening the rights of crime suspects: For the first time, the EU has made progress regarding the strengthening of the rights of suspects in criminal proceedings. Unsuccessful efforts have been made since 2004. As a first step, ministers agreed on an instrument entitling crime suspects to information and language interpretation. Furthermore, decisions have been taken on how we should try to strengthen legal security over the next five years. This includes aspects such as the right to legal representation.

* More stringent penal law to combat human trafficking: Consensus has been reached on more stringent penal regulations against human trafficking. The concept of human trafficking is being extended to include more cases than today whilst punishments are being increased on the EU level. In addition to this, the EU has agreed on an action-oriented plan for how cooperation with non-EU countries shall be pursued in the fight against human trafficking. The aim is to prevent people falling victim to human trafficking at an early stage.

* Better information exchange for more efficient crime-fighting: A strategy for how to make information exchange among crime-fighting authorities more efficient and legally secure has been adopted. Protection of the individual's personal data shall be strengthened.

* Visa exemptions: The decision on visa exemptions for FYROM, Montenegro and Serbia sends a strong signal about the EU perspective adopted by each of these countries.

* Support office for asylum issues: Under the guidance of the Swedish Presidency, the Council has reached agreement on the establishment of an asylum support office in Valetta, Malta. The support office is important to ensure the smooth running of the common asylum system.

* The common asylum system: We have made crucial progress in the negotiations on the common asylum system.

* Action plan for non-accompanied children: On a Swedish initiative, the European Commission has tasked the Commission to draft an action plan containing concrete measures to solve the problem of non-accompanied children. Non-accompanied children are a growing problem in many EU countries, not least in Sweden.

Healthcare issues

* Access to active antibiotics: The Presidency has forced the pace on a proposal that involves Member States cooperating to find ways of stimulating the pharmaceutical industry to develop new effective antibiotics. The Presidency has also taken the initiative to establish EU-US cooperation on antibiotics issues.

* eHealth for better patient safety when receiving care in another EU country: To ensure patients receive effective and safe treatment and care in another EU country, the Presidency has pushed for cooperation among Member States on eHealth.

* The pandemic – the A(H1N1) flu virus: An anti-flu strategy was adopted during the Swedish Presidency. The strategy covers access to vaccine, vaccination strategy, the vaccine approval process, information to the general public, global cooperation and contingency planning in sectors other than healthcare. At the ministerial meetings, the Presidency and the European Commission have given status reports on the development of the new swine flu pandemic in the EU and neighbouring countries. Joint Council conclusions have been adopted.

Competitiveness and research

* Towards an eco-efficient economy: The Presidency has highlighted the possibilities a transition to an eco-efficient economy offers: how Europe can take a green route out of the economic crisis towards greater competitiveness, improved welfare and new jobs.

* Better rules: The Presidency has intensified the work being done to improve regulation and has managed to get Member States to agree on continued strong efforts within the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament.

* The knowledge triangle shall strengthen European innovativeness: Securing investment in education and research leads to innovations that can provide growth is vital to Europe's competitiveness. The work has led to the issue now being high up on the EU agenda.

* A more effective administration: Electronic administration contributes to better growth, increased mobility and transparency. Member States have agreed on a ministerial declaration to build a better eUnion in 2015.

A EU patent

* Agreement on a common EU patent: After decades of negotiations, agreement as now been reached on everything apart from the language issue on how a common EU patent should be designed and regulated. The EU patent will promote innovation and provide European industry with a better chance of competing on the global market.

Agriculture and fisheries

* Better fisheries monitoring: The Presidency headed up the negotiations that led to the EU obtaining common regulations on fisheries monitoring. These regulations mean that the consumer can now trace the fish from the net to the table.

* Strengthened animal protection: The presidency has reached a preliminary agreement with the European Parliament on the substantial issues. The regulation will improve animal protection for laboratory animals in the whole of the EU. Certain technical adaptations remain as a result of the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

Telecommunications and transport

* The telecoms package: After two years of negotiations, the Presidency managed to unite the European Council and gain support from the European Parliament on a decision that will lead to better services and

protection for users and clearer requirements for information about the services on offer from operators.

* Future EU transport policy: Work has begun during the Swedish Presidency. The focus is on climate-smart and safe transport in Europe and on setting up efficient freight corridors through the EU.

Energy

* Improved energy efficiency: The Presidency has achieved the objective of supplying an ambitious and meaningful energy efficiency package containing three directives. These directives concern the energy labelling of energy-related products, the energy labelling of tyres and revised legislation on the energy performance of buildings.

* Strengthened energy cooperation with the US: The Swedish Presidency has strengthened the energy cooperation between the EU and the US through the establishment of a new Energy Council.

Environment

* Phase-out of phosphates in detergents: Sweden banned phosphates in detergents on 1 May 2008 and has been pushing for a ban on the European level ever since. The Baltic Sea Strategy contains targets for the phase-out of phosphates from detergents and Sweden has been given the task of coordinating this work. The Presidency has forced the pace on the issue and during the autumn has seen individual Member States and industry take their own initiatives in the issue. The European Commission will shortly propose legislation.

Source: Website of the Swedish EU Presidency.