

**EEE 1602/2//09
REV 2**

LIMITE

CONCLUSIONS

Subject : Conclusions of the 31st meeting of the EEA Council
Brussels, 19 May 2009

1. The thirty-first meeting of the EEA Council took place in Brussels on 19 May 2009 under the Presidency of First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Tomas Pojar of the Czech Republic. The meeting was attended by Mr Össur Skarphéðinsson, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iceland, by Dr Aurelia Frick, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein and by Mr Jonas Gahr Støre, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, by Members of the Council of the European Union and by a Representative of the European Commission.
2. The EEA Council noted that within the framework of the Political Dialogue, the Ministers discussed Trans-Atlantic relations, the Middle East and Afghanistan.
3. The EEA Council underlined the need for a coordinated and comprehensive action to restore global growth and to re-establish the banking industry's willingness/capacity to lend out money. The EEA Council stressed the importance of promoting synergy, solidarity and cooperation at European level. Ministers endorsed the goals agreed upon in the G20 Summit on 2 April and agreed that one of the main priorities remains to strengthen the financial system with the appropriate degree of regulation and oversight, based on the principle of transparency. They welcomed the agreement made to increase the funding of the IMF; to maximise the effectiveness of the measures taken, the EEA Council encouraged further international cooperation to enhance the effectiveness of the IMF and the Financial Stability Board (FSB).

4. The EEA Council welcomed the report of the high-level group on financial supervision in the EU and the Communication from the Commission on Driving European Recovery, in particular the recommendations, the enhancement of sound regulation (i.a. credit agencies and remuneration policies) and the promotion of integrity in the financial markets. The EEA Council furthermore emphasised the need for an inclusive supervisory framework.
5. The EEA Council welcomed the annual progress report approved by the European Council in March and looked forward to the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy for growth and employment. The EEA EFTA States are closely following the developments of the Strategy, with a view to participating in relevant parts.
6. The EEA Council welcomed the agreement achieved between the Council of the EU and the European Parliament on the Third Liberalisation Package, aiming for an effective and interconnected European energy market.
7. The EEA Council reiterated the importance of the Climate and Energy Package agreed by the EU in December 2008. The EEA Council highlighted the importance of the Package in contributing to a successful outcome of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009. The importance of continuous close co-operation between the EU and the EEA EFTA States in the area of energy and climate change was underlined, and especially on the emission trading scheme, the promotion of low carbon energy technologies, energy efficiency, renewable energy resources and as well as on carbon capture and storage (CCS). Relevant parts of the Climate and Energy Package will be incorporated into the EEA Agreement.
8. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the successful round-up of commitments under the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2004-2009. By the 30 April 2009 deadline, around 1100 projects, programmes and funds had been approved.

9. The Ministers noted the state of the ongoing negotiations on the future financial contributions by the EEA EFTA States for the reduction of economic and social disparities in the EEA and underlined the importance of finalising these negotiations as soon as possible in order to allow for continuity of the programmes.
10. Furthermore, the Ministers noted that the European Commission has agreed with Iceland and Norway bilaterally that the quota levels for certain fish and fishery products shall be reviewed, as laid down in the respective Additional Protocols to their bilateral Agreements with the European Economic Community.
11. The EEA Council noted the ongoing process of implementing a customs security element in Protocol 10 of the EEA Agreement, whereby Norway will be integrated in the security system of the European Community.
12. The EEA Council noted the Progress Report of the EEA Joint Committee and in particular
 - welcomed the participation of the EEA EFTA States in EEA-relevant EU Programmes. The programmes promote common interests towards a more competitive and innovative Europe and play a significant role in Europe's economic recovery. The EEA Council especially highlighted the importance of the European Year of Creativity of Innovation 2009, emphasising creativity and innovation as fundamental pillars for sustainable economic growth. The programmes are co-financed by the EEA EFTA States;
 - noted that an agreement could not be found for EEA EFTA participation in the Institute for Gender Equality. The EEA Council reconfirmed the wish to continue the intensive cooperation between the EU and the EEA EFTA States in the field of gender equality;

- welcomed the good progress made in the trade negotiations between the European Community and Iceland in processed agricultural products within the framework of Protocol 3 to the EEA Agreement. It equally noted the continued negotiations between the European Community and Norway on further liberalisation of trade in agricultural products on the basis of Article 19 of the EEA Agreement and looked forward to a successful outcome. It further encouraged the European Community and Norway to engage constructively in a review within the framework of Article 2(2) of Protocol 3 to the EEA Agreement;
- noted the commitment of the EEA EFTA States to complete the necessary national procedures regarding the Food Law Package as soon as possible;
- welcomed the follow-up of the Integrated Maritime Policy and underlined the importance of the close involvement of the EEA EFTA States in further developments, such as the Communication from the Commission on Strategic goals and recommendations for the EU's maritime transport policy through 2018, and the Communication and action plan with a view to establishing a European maritime transport space without barriers.
- welcomed the active involvement of the EEA EFTA States in the relevant parts of the Single Market Review;
- reiterated its commitment to the renewed social agenda, covering a wide range of areas such as employment, health, migration, social affairs, education and equality. The EEA EFTA States will follow closely the proposed directives and policy initiatives, within the scope of the EEA Agreement. Underlined the importance of social innovation to meet social needs during the economic crisis.

13. The EEA Council welcomed the EEA EFTA contributions to the decision-shaping process of EEA-relevant EC legislation and programmes through inter alia their participation in relevant committees, expert groups and agencies and by submitting EEA EFTA Comments. In particular the EEA Council:
- took note of the request of the EEA EFTA States to find a swift solution to the recent problems regarding the access for EEA EFTA citizens to work in the Executive Agencies established by the European Commission;
 - welcomed the comprehensive comments from the EEA EFTA States on the draft Consumer Directive.
14. The EEA Council held an orientation debate on Financial Crisis: Towards a new regulatory regime.
15. The Ministers underlined the importance for the Contracting Parties to ascertain that relevant actors throughout the European Economic Area remain well informed about the EEA Agreement.
16. The EEA Council underlined the importance of inviting EEA EFTA Ministers to attend relevant informal EU Ministerial Meetings and Ministerial Conferences on the basis of EEA EFTA participation in the Internal Market. The EEA Council also recalled the practice of inviting the EEA EFTA States — at the level of officials — to political dialogue meetings with relevant Council Working Parties in troika format and expressed its appreciation to the incoming Swedish Presidency for the continuation of this practice.
17. The EEA Council noted the Resolutions of the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted at its 32nd meeting in Strasbourg on 26 March 2009 on *The Annual Report on the Functioning of the EEA Agreement in 2008*.
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