

CONCLUSIONS

Subject : Conclusions of the 32nd meeting of the EEA Council
Brussels, 16 November 2009

1. The thirty-second meeting of the EEA Council took place in Brussels on 16 November 2009 under the Presidency of Mr *Jonas Gahr STØRE*, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway. The meeting was attended by Ms *Aurelia FRICK*, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein and Mr *Össur SKARPHÉDINSSON*, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, from the EEA EFTA side, as well as by Mr *Carl BILDT*, Minister for Foreign Affairs, representing the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, by Members of the Council of the European Union and by the Representative of the European Commission responsible for EEA Council matters, from the EU side.
2. The EEA Council noted that within the framework of the Political Dialogue, the Ministers discussed Afghanistan, Iran and the Middle-East.
3. The EEA Council underlined the need for a coordinated and comprehensive action to restore global growth and to rebuild confidence in the financial markets. It was its view that in the current mid- and post-crisis environment, particular focus should be on coordinated action among governments with regard to exit strategies, as soon as the recovery takes hold, for the medium- and long term sustainability of public finances.

4. The EEA Council stressed the importance of promoting synergy, solidarity and cooperation at European level. Ministers endorsed the goals concerning an enhanced cooperation on financial markets issues as agreed upon in the G20 Summit on 24-25 September and agreed that the two main priorities remain to strengthen financial supervision and to close existing gaps in the regulation of financial services, both on the European level but also world wide. They welcomed the proposals on the EU side for legislation establishing a European Systemic Risk Board. They also welcomed the proposals for the European System of Financial Supervisors consisting of three new authorities dealing with supervision of the securities-, banking- and insurance sectors. The EEA Council emphasised the importance of enhanced cooperation within the whole of the EEA on these matters and the possible invitation of EEA EFTA Member States, in these new structures as appropriate once they had been established. Furthermore, the Ministers welcomed the EU regulatory initiatives reviewing the measures for regulatory capital for banks, for alternative investment fund managers and for remuneration in the financial sector.
5. The EEA Council looked forward to the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy. The EEA EFTA States are closely following the developments of the Strategy, with a view to participating in relevant parts.
6. The EEA Council acknowledged the recent publication of 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 and 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, as well as on carbon capture and storage (CCS). Relevant parts of the Climate and Energy Package would be incorporated into the EEA Agreement.

8. The EEA Council welcomed the progress made on the Renewables Directive, which is EEA relevant and should be incorporated into the EEA Agreement according to the procedures provided for in this Agreement. It noted that the EEA EFTA States already have a high share of renewable energy sources.
9. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the increased emphasis on monitoring of grants and evaluation of results under the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2004-2009, with around 1200 projects, funds and programmes being implemented.
10. The Ministers welcomed the progress in the negotiations on the future financial contributions by the EEA EFTA States for the reduction of economic and social disparities in the EEA, while regretting the delay, and underlined the importance of finalising these negotiations as soon as possible in order to allow for continuity of the programmes.
11. Furthermore, the Ministers noted that the European Commission and Iceland and Norway respectively have made parallel progress in their bilateral consultations concerning the review of the quota levels for certain fish and fishery products, as laid down in the respective Additional Protocols to their bilateral Agreements with the European Economic Community.
12. Ministers took note of the application for EU membership submitted by Iceland in July.
13. The EEA Council welcomed the incorporation of a customs security element in Protocol 10 to the EEA Agreement, whereby Norway is integrated in the customs security system of the European Community.

14. 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. These 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 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010. The programmes are co-financed by the EEA EFTA States;
 - 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 hoped for a successful outcome. It further encouraged the European Community and Norway to engage constructively in the review process 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;
 - noted the EEA relevance of the Consumer Rights Directive and the comprehensive comments from the EEA EFTA States, which the EEA Council had welcomed at its last meeting;
 - welcomed the continued 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 participation 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.
15. 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.
16. The EEA Council held an orientation debate on Climate change.
17. 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.
18. 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 Spanish Presidency for the continuation of this practice.

19. The EEA Council noted the Resolutions of the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee adopted at its 33rd meeting in Trondheim, Norway on 28 October 2009 on the *The EEA and the Global Financial Crisis* and on *Labour Market Issues in the EEA: Posted Workers and the Freedom to Provide Services*; and the Resolutions of the EEA Consultative Committee adopted at its 17th meeting in Brussels on 26 May 2009, on *Green jobs; the importance of ambitious energy and climate policies for economic recovery and renewed growth* and on *The Baltic Sea Region: the role of civil society organisations and social partners in improving regional cooperation and identifying a regional strategy*.
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