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THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

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Subject : Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the EU response to the food crisis

At its meeting on 11 November 2008, the General Affairs and External Relations Council adopted the conclusions set out in the Annex hereto.

**Conclusions of the Council
and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council,
on
the European Union's response to the food crisis**

1. The European Union reaffirms its concern about the world food crisis and reiterates its firm commitment to helping developing countries that are particularly affected by the consequences.
2. It has already outlined a collective response to this challenge¹ and taken initial steps to meet the most urgent needs.
3. Thus, the Commission undertook to allocate EUR 800 million in 2008 and 2009, notably through food aid, emergency aid and redeployment of funds. In this regard, the Council welcomes the recent release of EUR 200 million through the European Development Fund as a response to the food crisis in ACP countries. Member States have made significant national contributions in response to the food crisis, including substantial increases in their voluntary contributions to the World Food Programme, bringing the European Union contribution to the World Food Programme to nearly EUR 700 million².
4. In order to have a lasting impact on the food producing capacity of family farms most affected by the crisis, particularly those run by women, it is necessary to make the EU response more operational and to adapt it to the changing needs of developing countries.

¹ Council conclusions of May 2008 (9907/08) and European Council conclusions of June 2008 (11018/1/08 REV 1).

² Consolidated contributions up to mid-October 2008; the figure for the whole of 2007 was EUR 572 million (Source: World Food Programme).

5. The Council recognises the need to continue taking immediate actions to help the populations most affected and vulnerable, to safeguard the next years' harvests by supporting agricultural production ahead of the upcoming campaigns, to address the structural causes of the crisis in order to boost food producing agriculture in a sustainable way and to ensure that developing countries are less vulnerable to the volatility in food prices, which harms the poorest. Developing countries are encouraged to address these challenges resolutely and to place agriculture higher on their policy agenda.
6. The current food crisis requires a joint and coherent response, coordinated by the international community, in synergy with civil society and the private sector. The EU promotes a Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food, as stated in the EU Action agenda for the MDGs, which was welcomed by the June 2008 European Council.
7. The EU's effort, as part of a concerted strategy, will be coordinated with ongoing work of the UN Task Force and the international expert groups. The EU commits itself to support, if necessary, the Task Force, which represents significant progress for international coordination. The Council calls for a satisfactory conclusion of the replenishment process of the International Fund for Agricultural Development.
8. The Council welcomes the ongoing reform process of the FAO, conducted in a constructive manner by all member countries of the organisation within the Conference Committee. The Council hopes that the forthcoming special session of the FAO Conference will adopt the immediate action plan for FAO renewal approved on 13 October by the Conference Committee. It is a fundamental tool to initiate a thorough transformation of the FAO that will allow it, in particular, to play its full part in the implementation of the global partnership for food and agriculture, in the framework of the international agriculture Roman pole, with the WFP and IFAD.

9. A comprehensive response taking into account the specific situations, policies and strategies of developing countries, to which the EU is determined to contribute, should aim at:
- i. meeting the vital food needs of the most vulnerable populations (through humanitarian assistance and safety nets, including cash transfers, etc ...);
 - ii. providing inputs (seeds and fertilisers), ensuring (i) not to encourage speculation or disrupt local markets and distribution networks, (ii) to comply with environmental standards;
 - iii. improving agricultural production, by ensuring an enabling environment and the right policy incentives linked to wider developmental objectives, notably regarding appropriate training and extension services, investments in infrastructures, better access to financing (including microfinance), market access and functioning, and risk and crisis prevention and management;
 - iv. supporting the private sector and partnership opportunities in order to increase production and trade in agricultural products in a sustainable way;
 - v. supporting agricultural professional groups, for example by enabling them to play a more prominent role in policy-setting, investing in agricultural research, and securing investment, particularly through improved systems for business law, and land tenure and land use policies, especially for women.
10. To this end, the Council, in line with the conclusions of the European Council of June 2008 demanding a reinforcement of EU support for public and private investment in agriculture, calls on Member States and the Commission to increase significantly the share of agriculture in official development aid.
11. The Council welcomes the work of the three institutions to implement the guidelines set by the European Council in June 2008 regarding the establishment of a new facility to support agriculture in developing countries, respecting the current financial perspective, and calls for an early conclusion of work to define an ambitious EU response to the food crisis before the end of 2008.

