

**Network of Diplomats and Experts on
European Diplomacy on Environment
and Sustainable Development**

15 July 2003

Action Plan

1. Overall purpose

To create a common framework of action, which will promote the ideals, interests and perspectives of the EU on environment and sustainable development in the medium and long term, both at bilateral and multilateral agreements, within the context of a wider external European policy.

This common framework will be built by a network of appointed diplomats and experts, who will communicate and exchange information and ideas on crosscutting issues of sustainable development and environment integration in bilateral and multilateral external relations.

The network will therefore serve to implement and follow-up the "strategy on environmental integration in the external policies of the General Affairs Council", adopted by the Barcelona European Council in March 2002.

2. Members

25 officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the 15 Member States and the 10 acceding countries plus a representative from the European Commission will serve as focal points of the network. The network will strengthen the contribution foreign ministries make towards achieving EU objectives in international diplomacy for the environment and sustainable development. Foreign Ministries have comprehensive expertise on international systems. They also command specific resources, in particular their network of embassies through which they access not only foreign governments but also civil society in foreign countries. The network should help environmental departments of foreign ministries to make the most effective use of their ministries' collective expertise and resources.

3. Aims

The network should:

- Work to implement in external affairs the Council's environment integration strategy, in line with the strategic and practical proposals contained therein,
- Assist the headquarters in gathering all necessary information in order to formulate an opinion on relevant issues in order to help provide third parties

- (countries and/or international organisations) with explanations on EU policies and on its positions on relevant issues,
- strengthen and exploit the existing structures and capacities of the MFAs in communicating and implementing the external dimension of the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy,
 - contribute to greater coherence between the EU's external and internal policies.

4. Tasks

At a **policy level**, the network will, among other things:

- address the main issues of the major ongoing or foreseeable negotiations so as to improve the communication of the E.U. towards its main partners on its positions,
- address the link between environment and security both in conflict prevention activities as well as in post-conflict reconstruction,
- bring together Member States' analyses of environment and security linkages in different regions,
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At a **structural level**, the network will:

- assist the headquarters in gathering all necessary information in order to formulate an opinion on international sustainable development issues,
- foster capacity-building within the foreign ministries systems,
- assess the level and nature of integration of environmental concerns into the work of Member States' Ministries of Foreign Affairs,
- provide a channel for the introduction of the external dimension of EU's Sustainable Development Strategy to the acceding countries.

At an **operational level**, the network will:

- help to provide third parties (countries and/or international organisations) with explanations on EU policies and on its positions on relevant issues.
- seek to ensure better use of EU delegations, embassies and missions for promoting the EU positions on environment and sustainable development issues,
- encourage E.U. diplomatic representations in third countries either to engage actively and collectively in existing bilateral dialogues on environment and sustainable development, or, to the extent necessary, initiate such dialogue in cases where it does not yet exist.

5. Organisation of future work

The organisation of work should reflect the policy, structural and operational tasks of the network, as outlined above. The sharing of tasks among members is vital.

A more focused work programme

- There is a link between environment and security that needs to be addressed in external relations and foreign policy. However, this is an overall purpose of the network's role and does not consist an operational task in itself at least at a first stage.
- The network will act as a catalyst of information with external partners and third parties in both directions, ie from the network to the third countries and from the third countries to the network. The focal points within the network will share among them 'intelligence' since some MFAs have better contacts than others.
- The network will contribute to the early preparations in negotiations. The information derived from third parties will be injected into the EU preparatory mechanisms.
- The network will feed in with environmental / sustainable development concerns other bilateral or multilateral meetings that take place within the context of external relations.
- The themes to be elaborated by the network will be selected accordingly every 6-8 months on the basis of the events that will take place during the next 6-8 months, ie the programme of work will be defined and updated by the calendar of international meetings.

Future meetings

It is proposed that within the duration of each Presidency there will be one meeting of the network.

6. Relation with the Climate Change Network

The Climate Change Network will dovetail with the initiative put forward by the Greek Presidency towards "European Diplomacy on Environment and Sustainable Development" as recorded in the conclusions of the European Council at Thessaloniki. The Climate Change Network will feed into the "Green Diplomacy Network". This has been decided at the first meeting of the "Green Diplomacy Network" on 25 June 2003 in Athens. The "Green Diplomacy Network" will cover all fields of environmental policy. However, the Green Diplomacy Network will rely on the Climate Change Network to work on climate change issues. Coherence between the two networks will be assured by the members of each network as well as the Presidency.

7. Coordination

The coordination of the network will reside in each Presidency in full association with the Commission. The Commission guarantees the continuity in the network's operation and agreed work programme.

8. Outcome

A report on the first two years of the network's operation will be presented to the GAERC for follow up and information, in June 2005.

