Report on the Commission White Paper: 'Adapting to climate change: towards a European framework for action'

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The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Vittorio PRODI (S&D, IT) on the Commission White Paper: 'Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action'.

The committee welcomes the White Paper and agrees with the objective of the proposed EU Adaptation Framework, i.e. to improve the EU's resilience in dealing with the impact of climate change. It especially welcomes the emphasis on **increasing the resilience of all ecosystems** as an essential defence against the impacts of climate change.

Members highlight the importance of establishing **national adaptation plans based on a common European framework** enabling the Member States to plan and communicate their adaptation efforts. They consider that such plans need to include risk and hazard maps showing infrastructure and installations that could pose a risk to the environment or to public health should adverse weather events occur. They call for such information to be made available to the public and the other Member States. They also highlight the importance of **mainstreaming adaptation into all EU policies,** particularly the common agricultural and fisheries policies, forestry policy and cohesion policy, and into legislation on environmental impact assessment, planning permission and building standards, (and of ensuring the coherence of such measures by means of a horizontal, cross-sectoral approach based on ecosystem resilience.

The report's salient issues are as follows :

Developing the knowledge base: the report calls on the Commission not only to develop a knowledge base about the impact of climate change with specific reference to the European Union, but also to pass on that knowledge to developing and industrialising countries. It also emphasises that research efforts should be strengthened, within the framework of the current Seventh Framework Programme and future research framework programmes, in order to address existing knowledge gaps in relation to hazards (past and likely future weather-related disasters).

The committee takes the view that vulnerability indicators should be drawn up as a matter of urgency. It urges the EEA, therefore, to produce reports analysing the risks that climate change presents to Europe's most vulnerable regions.

Members are of the opinion that it is necessary to **earmark funding for climate research**, which can be done more effectively at European level and will provide a sound basis for developing climate change adaptation policies. They emphasise the need to develop a network of local and regional climate change adaptation initiatives and to exchange experience on a Europe-wide basis. Identifying best practice solutions can generate added value for the EU strategy.

Integrating adaptation into EU policies: Members emphasise the need to adopt a cross-sectoral approach based on ecosystem resilience, habitat and biodiversity protection and the services provided by ecosystems, and to ensure synergy and coherence among the measures to be taken as part of all relevant sector-specific policies, such as water, agriculture and forestry, fisheries, soil, coastal and islands areas,

health and social policies, infrastructure, transport, energy, biodiversity, urban environments, migration, cultural heritage.

Structure and governance: Members stress the need for local and regional authorities to be recognised as pivotal actors in the struggle against the harmful effects of climate change. They believe that measures should be taken that reconcile economically innovative and sustainable action with protection of the natural environment and thus minimise conflicts of use between ecological and economic interests.

The Commission and the Member States are invited to:

- encourage a coordinated approach when dealing with adaptation to guarantee territorial cohesion across the EU;
- develop a comprehensive approach regarding the involvement of the insurance industry towards risk awareness and risk sharing;
- develop the public-private partnerships needed to create a long-term, strong and effective climate risk management framework (covering all aspects from risk awareness to risk sharing and recovery), with strong leadership by and the involvement of the public authorities.

Financing: Members emphasise that the EU budget does not currently reflect EU policy priorities in the field of adaptation to climate change. They stress that the next multiannual financial framework should accord a high ranking to climate change, and in particular to adaptation measures, ensuring that the necessary funds are available. The report recognises the historical responsibility borne by the industrialised countries for the current increase in global temperatures. Members reiterate the statements they made in resolution of 10 February 2010, including that EU commitments to finance climate efforts in developing countries should be new and additional to existing ODA commitments and independent of annual budgetary procedures in the Member States.

External dimension:the report reiterates the need to include adaptation measures in all EU external policies, in accordance with the Copenhagen Accord. The Commission is asked to consider increasing the public funds devoted to international cooperation in the forthcoming 8th Framework Programme (FP8), in: (a) developed countries, in order to increase the spread of renewable technologies; (b) developing countries, in order to support their fight against climate change affecting the most vulnerable regions of such countries, always with due regard to the particular circumstances of each region, the criterion being the social and economic development of those regions of developing countries with which international cooperation is organised; and (c) third countries adjoining the EU in which the effects of climate change are similar to those observed within the EU.

Lastly, Members support the proposal of the Commission to set up an **impact and adaptation steering group**.