Environment: strategy for the protection and sustainable use of soil

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The Presidency briefed the Council on progress concerning the draft directive establishing a framework for the protection of soil, as set out in its report.

Whilst Parliament delivered its opinion at first reading in November 2007; the **Council has not yet reached political agreement on this dossier**. Several delegations regretted this fact and expressed the need for an EU-level instrument so as to fill a gap in EU environmental legislation and put soil on par with water or air in terms of protection. Others reiterated their opposition to the proposal as well as their concerns in relation to subsidiarity, the administrative burden and cost-effectiveness. A number of ministers called for a **fresh approach in order to take discussions at European level on soil protection forward**.

To date, soil has not been subject to a specific protection policy at EU level. The draft directive would establish a common strategy for the protection of soil, based on the principles of:

- integration of soil concerns into other sectoral policies;
- prevention of threats to soil and mitigation of their effects;
- preservation of soil functions through the identification of priority areas and establishment of actions programmes;
- identification and remediation of contaminated sites;
- awareness raising, reporting and exchange of information.