EU and Euratom/Georgia, Japan, Norway, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Korea, Tajikistan, USA Agreement: continuing the International Science and Technology Center

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PURPOSE: to conclude the Agreement continuing the International Science and Technology Centre between the European Union and Euratom acting as one Party and Georgia, Japan, the Kingdom of Norway, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the United States of America.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: the International Science and Technology Centre ('ISTC') was set up in 1994 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was funded together with other Parties (USA, Canada, and Japan) through an international multilateral agreement for the **purpose of non-proliferation of scientific and technical expertise related to weapons of mass destruction** (WMD). Over time, other Parties joined the Agreement, i.e. Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Republic of Korea, Norway, Russian Federation and Tajikistan.

The ISTC works at the crossroads between scientific research and non-proliferation, and has funded almost 3000 projects with a total value of over EUR 550 million. The Union contribution amounts to approximately **EUR 270 million**.

In the latest years the concept and the work of the ISTC as a science centre evolved to take into account the changing proliferation landscape, the results of threat analyses and the evolving needs of the parties. It increasingly focused on supporting projects aiming at mitigation of broader Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear risks, not necessarily focused on scientists' redirection, but on promoting bio safety and biosecurity, physical upgrades of laboratories as well as stimulation of networking activities among relevant scientific communities.

Following the 2010 announced withdrawal of the Russian Federation, that becomes effective on 15 July 2015, the Parties agreed that a new Agreement needs to be put in place in order for the Centre to effectively fulfil its mandate under changed circumstances. On 21 October 2013, the Council authorised the Commission to start negotiations. The aims set out in the negotiating directives have been fully met.

In accordance with the Council Decision (EU) 2015/1989 the Agreement continuing the International Science and Technology Centre between the European Union and Euratom acting as one Party and Georgia, Japan, Norway, the Kyrgyz Republic, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Korea, Tajikistan, and the United States of America was **signed on 9 December 2015**, subject to its conclusion at a later date.

CONTENT: the Commission proposed that the Council adopt a decision aiming to conclude, on behalf of the European Union, the Agreement continuing the International Science and Technology Centre between the European Union and Euratom acting as one Party and Georgia, Japan, Norway, the Kyrgyz Republic, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Korea, Tajikistan, and the United States.

The Centre's core objectives as laid down in the continuation Agreement. These objectives are:

- to **promote the improvement of international mechanisms for the prevention of the proliferation of WMD** and their delivery systems, as well as of technologies, materials, and expertise that are key elements directly related to the development, production, use, or enhancement of WMD or their delivery systems (including dual-use technology, materials, and expertise);
- to give scientists and engineers with **knowledge and skills** applicable to WMD and their delivery systems, including dual-use knowledge and skills, opportunities for training and alternative employment where their knowledge and skills can be used for peaceful activities;
- to promote a **culture of security** with respect to the handling and use of materials, equipment, and technology which could be used for the design, development, production, or use of WMD or their means of delivery; and
- to contribute through its activities: (i) to the development of international scientific partnership, strengthening global security, and fostering economic growth through innovation; (ii) to basic and applied research and technology development and commercialization, inter alia, in the fields of environment, energy, health, and nuclear, chemical, and biological safety and security; and (iii) to promoting the further integration of scientists with technologies, material, and expertise applicable to WMD into the international scientific community.

In line with the negotiations directives, the Agreement:

- foresees that all the activities will benefit from the tax-free regime and other tax privileges in the recipient countries;
- enables the funding Parties to have full access to monitor, audit, evaluate and inspect EU funded projects, including inspection of the facilities benefiting from the funding;
- sets the immunities and privileges for the ISTC staff, including for the staff working on the behalf of the European Union. The text of Article 12 of the Agreement is fully compliant with the provision of Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations of 18 April 1961.