THE EEB’S ASSESSMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS OF
THE ITALIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU
July – December 2014

Based on the EEB’s Ten Green Tests for the Italian Presidency released in July 2014

“Good on circular economy, waste and GMOs, bad on energy”

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SUMMARY

The Italian Presidency got off to a good start with a joint informal Council meeting between Ministers of Environment and Employment which highlighted the potential for green jobs coming from ambitious policies for a circular economy and increased the involvement of Environment Ministers in the preparation of the European Semester process. The prospects for moving forward in this direction were however soon challenged by a multi-layered attack on environmental policy in September launched by then President-elect Juncker, on whom the argument of green jobs was lost. Soon after the new Commission was confirmed into office, this general downgrading of environmental protection turned into a sharp and targeted attack on a specific set of pending legislative proposals. First of all, there was the proposed plastic bags directive which was close to agreement when in particular Vice President Timmermans tried hard
to kill the deal and it was only thanks to the Italian Presidency, as well as the EP rapporteur, that a deal could be reached and the Commission backed down. Immediately afterwards however, Timmermans used the preparations for the Commission’s Work Programme for 2015 to try and withdraw two of the most significant environmental legislative proposals to have come out of the Barroso II Commission that had only been launched within the previous year, namely the air and waste packages. Again the Italian Presidency played an important role in mobilising Environment Ministers to voice their opposition to the Commission’s plans, first of all in being one of eleven Member States whose Environment Ministers wrote to the Juncker Commission in the weeks before the Environment Council to protest the mooted withdrawals and then crucially by gathering an overwhelming majority of Ministers at the December Environment Council to deliver a resounding rejection of any such withdrawals. Another important achievement of the Presidency was reaching a positive outcome on the GMO file. By contrast, the progress in relation to energy issues, notably energy efficiency and biofuels, was disappointing.

INTRODUCTION:

This is an assessment of the Italian Presidency by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), the largest federation of environmental citizens’ organisations in Europe. The EEB’s mandate encompasses all environment-related issues, a broad agenda comprising ‘traditional’ environmental issues as well as sectoral and horizontal policies with a direct or potential environmental impact, sustainable development and participatory democracy.

The EEB views six-month Presidencies as convenient periods over which progress on the EU’s environment-related policy and legislation can be measured. We appreciate that a Presidency cannot make decisions on its own. It needs the cooperation of the European Commission, European Parliament and other Member States. But the Presidency still has a special impact and influence, for example through the way in which it chairs discussions, prioritises practical work and gives a profile to specific issues.

The EEB’s assessment is not an overall political assessment of the Presidency’s performance. We are not assessing its role on foreign affairs issues, internal security matters or migration policies, for example. On the other hand, nor is the assessment limited to the activities and outcomes of the Environment Council; it covers all Council configurations to the extent that they deal with topics that affect the environment. Our assessment is based on the Ten Green Tests we presented to the Italian Government at the start of its Presidency in July 2014.

At the outset, the EEB wishes to acknowledge and express its appreciation of the generally open and cooperative approach adopted by the Italian Presidency.

On the Italian Presidency’s performance against the Ten Green Tests, item-by-item, the EEB reached the following conclusions:
1. Challenge Deregulation

The test

- Reject the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between the EU and Canada that was finalised in May 2014 as it is understood to include a highly problematic and fundamentally undemocratic Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism which could expose the EU and national governments to expensive lawsuits for passing environmental legislation;
- Oppose the inclusion under the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) of an ISDS mechanism, as Australia successfully did in its recent trade deal with the US, and of regulatory cooperation provisions which would effectively restrict the freedom of the EU to legislate to protect the environment;
- Counter the growing tendency for the economic crisis to be used as an excuse to push for deregulation in the environmental sector and challenge ideologically motivated attacks on environmental protection standards.

The verdict: Positive

Although the Commission is in the lead on most of the issues under these tests, the Presidency has a role to play for example by organising the reporting of the Commission to the Council on progress on trade negotiations. Under the Italian Presidency uncertainty continued in relation to CETA despite reports that negotiations were concluded in early May 2014. This means it is still unclear when Member States and the European Parliament would vote on it. Negotiations on TTIP during the Italian Presidency were put on the backburner with the US preferring to wait for a new Trade Commission to come into place and the EU waiting for the outcome from the US midterm elections.

The biggest push for deregulation during the Italian Presidency however came from the new Juncker Commission’s announcement in September to single out environmental protection as an issue where the EU would no longer develop new proposals, other than in the area of climate change. In particular under immediate threat were measures to reduce plastic bags pollution, as well as recently proposed measures to reduce air pollution and improve waste management. At the level of the Environment Council the Italian Presidency reacted to this by helping to bring together a letter signed by 11 Member States and supported by others to protest this. When it became clear how serious the Commission was in axing the waste and air packages they took the initiative of inviting Vice President Timmermans to the Council on 17 December and ensuring that the opposition of an overwhelming majority of Environment Ministers during the Council meeting was expressed loud and clear, thereby giving a badly needed message to the European Commission, one day after the latter had tried to hide its intentions with the air and waste packages behind spin.
2. Support the adoption of an ambitious air package

The test

- Support the adoption of an air package achieving the objective of the 7th Environmental Action Programme by 2030, i.e.; attain “levels of air quality that do not give rise to significant negative impacts on and risks to human health and environment”;
- Support ambitious binding emission reduction commitments (ERCs) for 2020, 2025 and 2030, including 2020 levels going significantly beyond those set under the revised Gothenburg Protocol and the 2005 TSAP, with ceilings for mercury included and those for methane to start in 2020; In particular ensure the Environment Council remains in full control over negotiating the revised NEC;
- Support the introduction of EU-wide source control measures to reduce air pollution, with particular attention to medium scale combustion, as well as domestic heating, shipping, non-road mobile machinery, and the agriculture sector;
- In the case of medium scale combustion (MCP), ensure that emissions limit values are aligned with what is achievable by the use of best available techniques (BAT), that the deadline for compliance is brought forward and that the proposed permitting, monitoring and reporting regimes are strengthened.

The verdict: mixed

In December 2013, the European Commission submitted the Clean Air Programme for Europe to the Council and the European Parliament. The package consisted of two legislative proposals: a proposal to revise the National Emission Ceilings (NEC) Directive and a proposal for a new Directive to limit emissions of certain pollutants into the air from medium combustion plants (MCP).

The Italian Presidency continued the examination of the package at working party level, with the European Commission and all Member States. The Presidency also continued political discussions on the MCP Directive at Council level.

In December, the Italian Presidency presented a compromise text on the MCP Directive, reducing the ambition level and providing greater flexibility for Member States in implementing the Directive. This watering down happened largely under pressure of the Commission’s threat to withdraw the package and an implicit understanding that reaching an agreement would lower this threat.

Concerning the NEC Directive, there were continued general discussions at working party level, but not any significant progress. The Presidency did not take the opportunity to steer the discussions in the direction of more ambitious efforts which would be necessary to reach safe air quality levels in the European Union. In particular, the Presidency should have highlighted the mismatch between the Commission’s proposal and the long term air quality objective recently endorsed by the Council as part of the 7th Environment Action Programme.

The Presidency should also have introduced to the Council the recent additional NEC Directive impact analysis prepared for the European Parliament, showing that the
adoption in October of new EU targets for Climate and Energy will significantly reduce the efforts needed by Member States, as well as the incremental costs, to achieve the targets in the proposed NEC Directive. This would have spurred a very much needed debate on how this gap could be bridged in the shortest time possible.

So while the Italian Presidency deserves full credit for mobilizing opposition to the withdrawal of the NEC Directive, its performance in respect of the regular work with two legislative proposals making up the air package was less commendable.

3. Fight climate change

The test:

- Ensure that the EU takes global leadership to secure progress in the negotiations towards an international agreement that will ensure that emission reduction pathways to 2050 are equitable and based upon the latest scientific information on keeping well below a 2°C rise, bearing in mind an emerging consensus that staying below a 1.5°C rise is more likely to be required, as well as upon global equity and justice; and to annul surplus credits from the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol;
- Adopt Council Conclusions on the EU’s future 2030 framework for climate and energy policies that support a three-target approach on greenhouse gas reductions (at least 60%), energy savings (40% end use) and renewable energy (45%) that reflect the necessary ambition level to at least reach the upper end of the EU’s stated emissions reduction goal for 2050 of 80-95%;
- Take effective steps to improve the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), including by taking further the Commission’s proposals for long-term solutions to match the EU ETS with the objectives of at least the 2050 decarbonisation roadmap, and ensure that ETS revenues are used to invest in climate action.

The verdict: Mixed

The discussions on a 2030 climate and energy policy framework under the Italian Presidency concentrated on the October Council which was expected to agree on a set of climate and energy targets, following a failure to do so in Spring this year. Council President van Rompuy played an important role in this discussion, with other countries like the UK and Germany being active as well, next to the Italian Presidency. Although the Council managed to reach an agreement on a target of 40% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030, this came at a very high price, in particular in the area of renewable and energy efficiency. Although the agreement on the EU’s climate commitment came too late for the UN meeting of heads of government in September, it did help the negotiations go forward in Lima. Nevertheless, agreements reached in Lima postponed the most important decisions in particular to close the emissions gap between what countries plan to do until 2020 and what is needed to keep average temperature rise below 2 degrees.

The UK in particular was instrumental in weakening targets for energy efficiency and renewables on mostly ideological grounds, namely that they would not be achieved
through a market based mechanism. This opposition was especially problematic since the outgoing Commission had made the binding nature of a 2030 efficiency target dependent on unanimous support by Member States. This now leaves the future of efficiency policies in the hand of the new incoming Juncker Commission, whose commitment to a binding efficiency target stands out from his otherwise highly regressive anti-environmental agenda and which will now be put to the test.

On the ETS, the Italian Presidency continued negotiations on the Market Stability Reserve proposed by the Commission in January 2014, but at the end of the Presidency only produced a progress report on areas of disagreement such as the starting date and what to do with the allowance covered by back loading.

4. Reform Energy Policies

The test

- Adopt a binding 40% end-use energy savings target as part of the 2030 EU climate and energy policy framework to tap the EU's energy savings potential and increase energy security;
- Ensure that the review of the Energy Efficiency Directive leads to closing the gap to the 20% goal of improving energy efficiency, notably by making the target binding on the Member States;
- Reach an agreement on the Energy Tax Directive that leads to significantly higher minimum tax levels, especially for diesel (at least €470/1000 litres by 2018), maintains the CO2 component proposed by the Commission and removes tax exemptions;
- Ensure a political agreement on ILUC and biofuels is reached that leads to a significant improvement of the Council’s first reading position, includes ILUC factors in both the Renewable Energy Directive (RED) and Fuel Quality Directive (FQD) for compliance purposes, not only reporting, and supports the cap on unsustainable land-based biofuels;
- In the 2030 framework for climate and energy, support a limit on the share of unsustainable bioenergy within the target for renewable energy and the introduction of comprehensive carbon accounting;
- Do not allow shale gas, the exploration of which comes with high environmental and economic risks, to become an obstacle to more effective climate and energy strategies such as energy savings and renewables.

The verdict: negative

The agreement in the October Council on the 2030 climate and energy package, although on balance helpful in the preparations for the COP in Paris in 2015, were bad news for the chances of the EU to adopt a 40% binding energy savings target and for further efforts to close the gap to meeting the existing non-binding 20% target for 2020.

The prospects for an agreement on the Energy Taxation Directive during the Italian Presidency sank lower and lower as a result of opposition from a small number of
Member States such as Poland over the CO2 basis for the tax and Luxembourg over the minimum tax rate. The new Commission is now planning to withdraw the proposal.

On biofuels and ILUC the Italian Presidency did not make a lot of effort in the file, postponing the formal adoption of the Council’s first reading position to December and hence moving the possibility of reaching a political agreement to the Latvian Presidency. This contributed to a further delay for an already long awaited and badly needed revision of the current EU Biofuels policy.

5. GMOs

The test

- Strive for a second reading agreement with the Parliament on the legislative proposal aimed to combine the EU authorization system on GMOs with the right for Member States to ban GM crops in their own territory, which:
  - Legally strengthens the right to introduce national bans, changing the legal basis from article 114 to article 192 of the TFEU, and to ensure that environmental and agricultural impacts - together with socio-economic ones – are recognized as legitimate grounds for a national GM crop ban;
  - Ensures that a central role is played by the Commission in assessing the legitimacy of the grounds for a ban, without any unjustified interference of the applicant biotech company;
  - Includes a clause providing for revision of the EU authorization procedure of GMOs by the end of 2015 so as to finally implement the December 2008 conclusions of the Environment Council.

Verdict: positive

The Italian Presidency succeeded in reaching a second reading agreement with the Parliament on the legislative proposal aimed to combine the EU authorization system on GMOs with the right for Member States to ban GM crops in their own territory. The agreement takes on board some of the key amendments proposed by the Parliament improving the initial Council position. It ensures a central role of the Commission in assessing the legitimacy of the grounds for a national ban, avoiding any unjustified interference of biotech companies. The agreement excludes the two-year limitation - proposed initially by the Council - to the Member States’ right to ban. Governments are allowed to decide whether or not to restrict the cultivation of a GM crop in their territory independently of whether two years passed from the authorization of the GM crop at EU level. In addition, the agreement includes a clause providing for the revision in two years time of the EU authorization procedure of GMOs. Unfortunately the agreement fails to strengthen the environmental grounds for national bans, since it does not change the legal basis from article 114 to article 192 of the TFEU.
6. Circular Economy

The test

- Facilitate a constructive discussion in the Council on a Circular Economy Package to ensure aligning the EU product and waste policies with the 7th EAP and the Resource Efficiency Roadmap;
- Ensure that a 40% resource efficiency target for 2030, calculated as raw material consumption per GDP, is complemented by a more detailed resource efficiency dashboard at European, national and as possible priority sectors levels, encompassing quantitative indicators such as total material consumption, CO2, water and land use footprint;
- Grasp the potential of product policy, notably the Ecodesign Directive, for creating the proper conditions for a circular economy, bearing in mind that 80% of the environmental impact of equipment is determined at the design stage, and particularly support requirements for durability, reparability and recyclability of products, including the de-toxification of material as a crucial enabler for reusing and recycling material cost-effectively;
- Make sure that the “Zero Waste programme for Europe ” associated with the “Towards circular economy” communication is not restricted to eliminating waste to landfill, but also addresses the waste to energy question and integrates provisions to avoid waste incineration that is not compatible with the material reuse and recycling.

The verdict: positive

The Italian Presidency kicked off the debate on the circular economy package which addresses the over-use of natural resources by putting this on the agenda of the Informal Environment Council in July where it not only promoted a positive narrative around the multiple benefits of the package but also promoted the idea of introducing a resource productivity target through the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In the October Environment Council conclusions, the Member States agreed that the transition towards a circular and low-carbon economy would create business opportunities and benefit competitiveness and employment in the Union.

In the discussions initiated in the Council, it was commonly recognised that improved resource efficiency could bring together economic development and a reduction in environmental impact. The Council only agreed to a non-binding target in principle which will still need to be followed up with a set of binding targets and indicators in order to achieve the objectives set out in the 7th EAP and Resource Efficiency Roadmap.

Despite this good start of the debate the Italian Presidency did not reach any kind of agreement with regard to the resource efficiency target and concrete further steps beyond waste policy to move towards a circular economy. However, its robust defence of the circular economy concept in particular at the December Environment Council when opposing withdrawal of the waste package has laid down an important marker.
7. Waste Policies

The test:

- Support a renewed ambition for waste framework policy aligned with the waste treatment hierarchy, notably the introduction of a binding waste prevention target on food waste, specific objective for reuse and preparation for reuse activities, and a minimum 70% recycling targets for municipal solid waste by 2030, calculated on a unique harmonised methodology at European level;
- Ensure the systematic introduction of economic instruments in all waste management plans to be notified to the Commission to support a proper implementation of the waste policy, such as reinforced extended producer responsibility, pay-as-you-throw schemes and the taxation of landfill and incineration of untreated waste;
- Support an update of the packaging and packaging waste Directive targets, making the best of this integrated product and waste legislation, boosting the overall level of recycling to over 80% by 2030 and revising the old fashioned essential requirements set in 1994 to enhance prevention of over-packaging and incentivise reusable solutions;
- Support a ban on landfilling and incinerating of all the recyclable and compostable waste by 2020, and set a staged target on the maximum amount of residual waste/capita.year to be landfilled or incinerated.

The verdict: Positive

The discussions on the Waste Package, the only legally binding element of the Circular Economy Package, advanced well in the Council. The Environment Council in October adopted quite positive conclusions for the dossier in which the Member States agreed that the conservation and rational use natural resources is one of the overarching objectives of sustainable development. The discussions were constructive yet showed a high level of controversy on certain issues such as calculation methodology. This means that despite a good start, still a lot will need to be done to improve the Package.

There was a broad agreement in Council that the EU and Member States should work together to unlock the investments needed to achieve the circular economy. This set a positive background to further upgrade the EU waste policies and gave a strong indication that the Member States are willing to undertake the challenge in order to improve their waste management for the sake of their economies, people’s health and environment.

On top of this, a concrete improvement was achieved in defending and finally adopting the deal on new EU rules to reduce plastic bag use. Although this was not explicitly mentioned in the test, we consider it important flag it up as an achievement. Despite the threat by the Commission First Vice-President on “better regulation” to withdraw the proposal, a historic breakthrough in tackling a pervasive source of plastic waste in our environment was achieved thanks to the Italian Presidency as well as the EP rapporteur who clearly facilitated the deal. The outcome is that Member States will be obliged either to introduce pricing for plastic bags or to deliver ambitious reduction targets of cutting the
plastic bags consumption to max 40 bags per person/year by 2025. They will be also allowed to put in place market restrictions as bans.

Despite the laudable efforts of the Italian Presidency to protest the Commission’s intention to withdraw the recently launched waste package, the Commission nonetheless formally announced its intention to withdraw the proposal under the very unconvincing pretext that they would like to improve it and re-table a more ambitious one if they were serious in this intent, it could clearly be done without withdrawing the current proposal. It therefore now falls to the Latvian Presidency to lead the mobilisation of Council to challenge the Commission’s disastrous political decision making.

8. Protect the public from harmful chemicals

The test

- Encourage the Commission to step up its work towards achieving the 7EAP’s goals in relation to chemicals by developing new EU tools to address nano materials, develop and publish an Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals’ (EDC) package and extend information requirements for all carcinogens, mutagens and reproductive toxicants regardless of their production volume;
- Ensure that the Council conclusions on the REACH EDCs review are adopted under the Environment Council as opposed to the Competitiveness Council and acknowledge that EDCs cannot be adequately controlled and therefore need to be phased out as soon as practicable;
- Guarantee that the draft amendments of the EU Toy Safety Directive to be reviewed by Council and Parliament will ensure that children are not exposed to EDCs, as well as any other hazardous substance;
- At EU level, promote further actions to address mercury including:
  - Phasing out mercury in dental care since safe mercury-free alternatives are available;
  - Adopting ambitious BAT conclusions with Associated Emission Levels (AELs) in the new Large Combustion Plant Best Available Techniques Reference Document (LCP BREF) that require a significant reduction in emissions in the sector, since this is the largest source of mercury emissions in the air in Europe and globally.
- At global level, continue the EU leadership role on activities related to preparation for ratification and implementation of the Minamata Treaty on Mercury, and the collaborative work with NGOs.

The verdict: neutral

There is no specific work towards achieving the 7EAP’s goals in relation to chemicals by developing new EU tools to address nano materials, Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDC) or a non-toxic environment.

The Italian Presidency set the agenda for the EU Council to express its view on the transparency and traceability proposal by the European Commission to ensure product safety in the European market, advancing new rules for a stronger protection of
consumers and increasing levels of safety in the single market from non-food consumer products (including products imported from third countries).

On nano, the Italian Presidency hosted an institutional event (LET’S 2014 - Leading Enabling Technologies for Societal Challenges 2014) that aimed to discuss how Europe can support the growth and the creation of new jobs and face societal challenges through new products, processes and services on the perspective of Nanotechnologies (among others) in order to point out how the industrial system should be able to develop the industry's ability to integrate - through a systemic approach - creativity, culture, knowledge and competitiveness. The EEB welcomes the inclusion of knowledge in its agenda but regrets that safety is not a key factor.

Both the REACH review of extension of information requirements for all carcinogens, mutagens and reproductive toxicants and the one on EDCs are still blocked by the Commission so there was no chance for the Italian Presidency to conclude on this.

The Commission draft amendments of the EU Toy Safety Directive was not included in the Council agenda.

With respect to mercury, a long awaited preliminary opinion on dental amalgam from the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR) was published in September and recommended mercury-free alternatives in place of dental amalgam for children’s primary teeth and in pregnant patients. Work on the LCP BREF is ongoing and a revised draft report is awaited end of January 2015.

The final draft report of the EC commissioned study concerning the EU legislative gaps vis-à-vis the Minamata Convention and the review of the Regulation on mercury export ban and safe storage was published in June 2014, followed by a public consultation and meeting in July and November. No particular initiatives were taken by the Presidency within this context.

The Italian Presidency together with the Commission took the lead in the negotiations on activities related to preparation for ratification and implementation of the Minamata Treaty on Mercury.

9. Better Environmental Governance

The test

- Call on the Commission to speed up the process of presenting a new proposal for a Directive on Access to Justice, building on and strengthening the 2003 proposal; and once issued, swiftly convene Council working group meetings to make good progress on this directive;
- Encourage the Commission to make good progress with the preparation of a horizontal EU law for Environmental Inspections aiming at the publication of the overdue draft as soon as the new Commission is in place and in any case before the end of 2014; convene Council working group meetings immediately after the draft has been tabled to make as much progress as possible during the Italian Presidency;
• Ensure that work in the framework of REFIT aiming at the reduction of administrative burden will not be misused to lower environmental standards or weaken environmental law.

**The verdict: negative**

Given the scale and the audacity with which the new Juncker Commission went about its attack on progressive green policies, the Italian Presidency played mostly a defensive role, trying to save what could be saved as in the example of the plastic bags.

Although Commissioner Potocnik prepared new legal proposals on access to justice and environmental inspections which were more or less ready and up to the starting line, and made no secret of this, they did not receive top-level political support from the outgoing Barroso II Commission and it seems even less likely that they will be taken up by the new Commission in the near future. Whereas in theory, Commission Vice President Timmermans’s responsibility for sustainability and the rule of law as well as for better regulation should make him an advocate for better environmental governance, his first weeks in office suggest otherwise.

The Italian Presidency did not advance, or succeed in persuading the Commission to advance, on the important tools of better environmental governance mentioned in this test (the greening of the Semester is mentioned in the following test).

### 10. Sustainable Development

**The test:**

- **Building on the European Council conclusions of October 2012 on the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference, provide input to the review of the Europe 2020 strategy with a view to strengthening its environmental content, seek a review of other relevant EU and national policies, strategies and programmes in order to en and maintain the pressure on the Commission to develop a new Sustainable Development Strategy;**
- **Strengthen the environmental component of the European Semester, including by adopting progressive conclusions in the Environment Council in advance of the forthcoming Annual Growth Survey;**
- **Ensure that the EU plays a progressive role in the preparation of the post-2015 agenda including the drafting of sustainable development goals which put sustainable consumption and production at their core and ensure that environmental sustainability is central to all external dimension policies funded by the EU budget.**

**Verdict: Neutral**

A mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy will take place at the Spring 2015 European Council, and a public consultation was conducted in 2014. The Italian Presidency addressed the issue early on by putting it on the agenda of the Informal Environmental Council in July, where it promoted a number of ideas for greening the
Strategy, including through greening the European Semester process, and by organising a joint meeting of Environment and Employment Ministers to highlight the job creation potential in the green economy. These efforts bore fruit when the Environment Council in October adopted useful conclusions, including for the first time ever in relation to the European Semester, although the conclusions fell short of really challenging the more fundamental problems of the current Europe 2020 Strategy, including for example arbitrary limitation of core objectives to five, though the Presidency had promoted the idea of a sixth target on resource productivity. Furthermore, the Presidency missed the opportunity to revive the discussion around the EU’s Sustainable Development Strategy.

On the other hand, the Presidency has contributed to the EU playing a positive role in key international forums and processes in the Post-2015/SDG process, which will carry forward the outcomes of Rio+20. Special attention was given to the United Nations Ten Year Framework of Programs of Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP SCP). In response to the Juncker Commission’s stronger focus on an outdated “jobs and growth” agenda at the expense of the social and environmental dimension, the Presidency made efforts to push for the sustainable development agenda and to safeguard the environmental concerns in the new political context.