

PRESS RELEASE

9916/91 (Presse 231)

1544th Meeting of the Council

- ENVIRONMENT/ENERGY -

Brussels, 13 December 1991

President: Mr J.G.M. ALDERS,

Minister for the Environment
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

13.XII.91
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The Governments of the Member States and the Commission of the European Communities were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mr W. CLAES Deputy Prime Minister,
Minister for Economic Affairs
and Planning

Mrs Miet SMET State Secretary for the Environment

Denmark:

Mrs Anne Birgitte LUNDHOLT Minister for Industry and Energy

Mr Pir Stig MØLLER Minister for the Environment

Germany:

Mr Klaus TÖPFER Federal Minister for the Environment

Mr Jürgen MÖLLEMANN Federal Minister for Economic Affairs

Greece:

Mr Achilleas KARAMANLIS Minister for the Environment,
Regional Planning and Public Works

Mr Georges APOSTOLAKIS Secretary-General, Ministry of Industry
Energy and Technology

Spain:

Mr José BORRELL FONTELLES Minister for Public Works and Transport

Mr Claudio ARANZADI Minister for Industry and Energy

Mr Vincente ALBERO State Secretary for the Environment

France:

Mr Dominique STRAUSS-KAHN Minister with responsibility for Industry

Ireland:

Mr Robert MOLLOY Minister for Energy

Mr Rory O'HANLON Minister for the Environment

Italy:

Mr Giorgio RUFFOLO Minister for the Environment

Mr Guido BODRATO Minister for Industry

Luxembourg:

Mr Alex BODRY Minister for the Environment
and Energy

Netherlands:

Mr J.G.M. ALDERS Minister for the Environment

Mr Kloos ANDRIESSEN Minister for Economic Affairs

Portugal:

Mr Luis Fernando de MIRA
AMARAL Minister for Industry and Energy

Mr Antonio TAVEIRA State Secretary responsible for
Natural Resources

United Kingdom:

Mr Michael HESELTINE Secretary of State for the Environment

Mr John WAKEHAM Secretary of State for Energy

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Commission:

Mr Carlo RIPA DI MEANA Member

Mr A. CARDOSO E CUNHA Member

COMMUNITY STRATEGY TO LIMIT CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS AND TO IMPROVE ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The Council held an exhaustive discussion on the strategy proposed by the Commission in October 1991 to limit carbon dioxide emissions and to improve energy efficiency.

It will be recalled that the joint ENVIRONMENT/ENERGY Council held on 29 October 1990 in Luxembourg set as a Community policy objective for climate change the stabilization of CO2 emissions at the 1990 level by the year 2000 and provided a series of indications as to means and instruments to be used for that purpose. This stabilization objective has been reaffirmed by the Community at the negotiations for a general Convention on Climate Change, which are now being actively pursued with a view to the Rio Conference to be held in June 1992.

At the close of discussions the Council adopted the conclusions set out below:

1. The Ministers of Environment and Energy, meeting in joint Council on 13 December 1991, conclude the following with regard to the Communication from the Commission: "A Community Strategy to limit carbon dioxide emissions and to improve energy efficiency", noting at the same time that the fiscal aspects of the communication will also be discussed in the ECOFIN Council.
2. The Council recalls as its point of departure the conclusions of the Joint Energy/Environment Council meeting on 29 October 1990.

3. The Council expresses its appreciation of the communication of the Commission and recognizes it as an important step in the process of developing measures which will enable the Community and its Member States to achieve the objectives referred to in the above conclusions, and notably the stabilisation of CO2 emissions in the Community by the year 2000 at 1990 level.
4. The Council recognizes the need for a strategy at Community level based on a wide ranging package of Community and national measures.
5. Within the Community strategy, it is necessary to formulate, in accordance with the conclusions of the joint Energy/Environment Council of 29 October 1990, national programmes including strategies and targets for limiting CO2 emissions as well as national programmes for limiting other greenhouse gas emissions.

These programmes, appropriate to the specific circumstances of each Member State, will include measures decided at Community level as well as national measures. Possible measures to be considered include instruments of a technical, financial and social nature to be applied in the relevant sectors.

6. In this connection, the Council invites the Commission and Member States to make an inventory of the emissions relating to greenhouse gases, including methane (CH4), nitrous oxide (N2O), ozone (O3) and carbon monoxide (CO), with a view to establishing strategies for limiting such emissions.

7. Member States will send to the Commission as soon as possible their national programmes as well as other relevant information. Existing national programmes will be notified before April 1992. The Commission will forward the programmes and information to other Member States and will also make an assessment of national action taken as a whole in relation to the overall Community stabilisation objective. The Commission will report regularly to the Council thereon.
8. Specific measures at Community level will include strengthening of R & D effort, further efforts to improve energy efficiency, increased development of new and renewable energy resources, improvement in vehicle fuel efficiency and other transport measures. The Community programmes including Thermie, Joule and SAVE will be further strengthened in the future where necessary. These specific measures, together with other policy measures such as those related to waste recycling and action on sinks of CO₂, will make an important contribution towards achieving the stabilisation objective.
9. The Council, basing itself on existing studies and analyses, recognises that the national programmes and specific measures referred to above are unlikely to be sufficient alone to reach the Community objective of CO₂ stabilisation.
10. It further recognises that, in order to reach CO₂ stabilisation in a cost-effective way, higher energy pricing through the use of fiscal instruments is likely to be needed to complement national and Community energy efficiency programmes.

11. The Council fully recognises however that the introduction of Community-wide taxation would pose a wide range of complex issues requiring further study, by Ministers who are competent on such questions. Such issues include:
- the relevant (macro)-economic and social consequences of the proposed tax;
 - the energy policy consequences of the proposed tax;
 - the consequences and the elaboration of the proposed temporary relief to the sectors employing energy intensive production processes and having a large involvement in international trade;
 - the most appropriate base of this tax, taking into account the consequences for economic sectors;
 - the legal and practical possibility and the economic consequences of introducing a harmonized rate and the possibility to provide for a temporary suspension of taxation and for modification of the rate in relation to economic developments and environmental situation in the different Member States and progress towards the stabilization objective.
12. The Council invites the Commission to put forward formal proposals for concrete measures arising from the Community strategy, including any necessary proposals for Community-wide taxation taking into account the studies referred to above when they become available and the conclusions of the ECOFIN Council.

13. In order to facilitate a coordinated participation of Member States, such measures should take into account the concept of equitable burden-sharing, in accordance with the conclusions of the Joint Energy/Environment Council of 29 October 1990 ⁽¹⁾, in the light of the potential for and constraints affecting CO2 reductions as well as of the present situation with regard to emissions in Member States.

14. The Council, noting the international effort to stabilise CO2 emissions, urges the Commission and the Member States to make every effort to ensure that as many countries as possible, and notably major trading partners, undertake commitments and implement measures on the lines of those undertaken by the Community and Member States.

15. The Council reaffirms the importance it attaches to the success of the negotiations taking place in the Intergovernmental Committee on Climate Change and in the UNCED process and instructs the Commission to continue its preparatory work on a Community strategy so as to allow a Council Decision in May 1992 at the latest.

(1) In this context, the Spanish delegation wishes to draw attention to paragraphs 7 and 8 of those conclusions.

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BRUXELLES, LE 12 DECEMBRE 1991

NOTE BIO(91) 402 AUX BUREAUX NATIONAUX
CC. AUX MEMBRES DU SERVICE DU PORTE-PAROLE

PREPARATION DU CONSEIL CONJOINT 'ENVIRONNEMENT/ENERGIE' DU 13
DECEMBRE 1991

STRATEGIE COMMUNAUTAIRE POUR LIMITER LES EMISSIONS DE
DIOXYDE DE CARBONE (CO2) ET POUR AMELIORER L'EFFICACITE
ENERGETIQUE (VOIR P-67)

LES TRAVAUX MENES EN 1990 TANT AU NIVEAU COMMUNAUTAIRE QU'AU
NIVEAU INTERNATIONAL SUR LE PHENOMENE DU CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE
ONT MONTRE QUE LES EMISSIONS DE CO2 ENTRAIENT POUR UNE PART
IMPORTANTE DANS L'EFFET DE SERRE ET DEVAIENT ETRE STABILISEES.

LORS DE LEUR PREMIERES REUNION CONJOINTE, LE 29 OCTOBRE 1990, LES
MINISTRES DE L'ENERGIE ET DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT SE SONT FIXES UN

OBJECTIF = STABILISATION D'ICI L'AN 2000 DES EMISSIONS TOTALES DE CO2 DE LA COMMUNAUTE A LEUR NIVEAU DE 1990. ILS ONT DEMANDE A LA COMMISSION DE LEUR PRESENTER DES OPTIONS ET LES MESURES PERTINENTES QUI POURRAIENT ETRE ENVISAGEES POUR ATTEINDRE CET OBJECTIF.

LA COMMISSION A PRESENTE AU CONSEIL LE 1ER OCTOBRE DERNIER LES GRANDES LIGNES DE LA STRATEGIE QU'ELLE PROPOSE BASEE SUR DES ACTIONS DE RECHERCHE, DES MESURES INCITATIVES, PARMI LESQUELLES DES MESURES FISCALES (ENTRE AUTRES UNE TAXE CO2 ENERGIE) ET DES PROGRAMMES COMPLEMENTAIRES NATIONAUX.

LE CONSEIL 'ENVIRONNEMENT' A EU UN PREMIER ECHANGE DE VUES SUR CES DIFFERENTS ELEMENTS LORS DE LA REUNION INFORMELLE D'AMSTERDAM LE 12 OCTOBRE DERNIER.

UN GROUPE A HAUT NIVEAU REUNISSANT DES EXPERTS DE L'ENERGIE ET DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT A EXAMINE LA COMMUNICATION DE LA COMMISSION ET A

PREPARE UN PROJET DE CONCLUSIONS TRES SUBSTANTIEL ENCORE ASSORTI DE NOMBREUSES RESERVES.

LA STRATEGIE PROPOSEE PAR LA COMMISSION REPOSE SUR TROIS VOLETS : DES MESURES ECONOMIQUES, DES ACTIONS DE RECHERCHE ET LA TAXE CO2. CETTE COMBINAISON DE MESURES DIFFERENTES SERA NECESSAIRE POUR ATTEINDRE L'OBJECTIF RECHERCHE MAIS LES MINISTRES NE SERONT PAS APPELES A DECIDER DE LA TAXE LE 13 DECEMBRE. PAR CONTRE, ILS DEVRONT DONNER LEUR AVIS SUR LA NECESSITE OU NON POUR LA COMMISSION DE PREVOIR UNE REPARTITION DES EFFORTS ENTRE LES ETATS MEMBRES (BURDEN SHARING).

AMITIES,

C. STATHOPOULOS

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+++ END OF TEXT +++

Bruxelles, le 13 décembre 1991

NOTE BIO(91) 402 (suite 1 et fin) AUX BUREAUX NATIONAUX
CC. AUX MEMBRES DU SERVICE DU PORTE-PAROLE

CONSEIL CONJOINT ENVIRONNEMENT/ENERGIE DU 13 DECEMBRE 1991

Le Conseil conjoint des Ministres de l'Environnement et de l'Energie a invité la Commission à présenter des propositions formelles sur des mesures concrètes résultant de sa communication sur la limitation des émissions de dioxyde de carbone (CO2) et l'amélioration de l'efficacité énergétique. Cette invitation inclut également des propositions fiscales nécessaires qui seront faites à la lumière des discussions sur la taxe CO2/Energie qui auront lieu au Conseil ECO/FIN de lundi prochain ainsi que d'une série d'études, notamment sur les conséquences macroéconomiques et sociales de la taxe, les exemptions temporaires de certains secteurs énergivores et les conséquences sur les politiques énergétiques de chaque Etat membre.

Après de longues et laborieuses discussions, le Conseil conjoint est parvenu ainsi à un accord sur un projet de conclusions que la Présidence avait préparé et qui reconnaît entre autre :

- que les seuls programmes nationaux ne pourraient pas atteindre l'objectif de la stabilisation des émissions de CO2 à l'an 2000 au niveau de 1990, et
- que pour arriver à cette stabilisation des instruments fiscaux devraient être nécessaires afin de compléter les programmes promouvant l'efficacité énergétique nationaux et communautaires.

Répondant à une demande pressante de la délégation espagnole le Conseil souligne dans ses conclusions que les mesures envisagées devront tenir compte du principe d'une répartition équitable des charges entre les Etats membres tel qu'il est formulé dans les conclusions du Conseil Environnement/Energie d'octobre 1990 (Rappel : "Member States which start from relatively low levels of energy consumption and therefore low emissions measured on a per capita or other appropriate basis, are entitled to have CO2 targets and/or strategies corresponding to their economic and social development, while improving the energy efficiency of their economic activities").

Par ailleurs, le Conseil demande à la Commission et aux Etats membres de déployer tout effort pour assurer que le plus grand nombre de pays possible et plus particulièrement les partenaires commerciaux de la Communauté, prennent des mesures de stabilisation des émissions de CO2.

Enfin le Conseil demande à la Commission de présenter ses propositions à temps pour que le Conseil Environnement de mai 1992 puisse prendre des décisions en vue de la Conférence de Rio en juin 1992.

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Commentant devant la presse les résultats du Conseil, les Commissaires CARDOSO E CUNHA et RIPA di MEANA ont exprimé leur satisfaction pour le "pas important" franchi aujourd'hui vers une stabilisation des émissions de CO2.

Le Commissaire à l'Energie a considéré que le Conseil s'était rapproché beaucoup aujourd'hui de la proposition de la Commission. Les études demandées sont parfois un alibi pour éviter les décisions, a-t-il dit, mais la Commission préparera minutieusement ses propositions. Interrogé sur l'impact d'une taxe CO2/Energie sur la continuation des subsides pour le charbon, M. CARDOSO E CUNHA a remarqué qu'une telle taxe ferait pression vers la bonne direction d'une diminution des subsides.

Le Commissaire RIPA di MEANA a souligné que la Commission intensifiera ses contacts avec ses grands partenaires commerciaux (USA - JAPON) afin de les convaincre de suivre la stratégie communautaire. Interrogé sur une éventuelle utilisation d'une partie des revenus d'une taxe pour le financement de projets environnementaux communautaires, le Commissaire a insisté sur la neutralité fiscale d'une telle taxe qui serait perçue au niveau national et utilisée par les Etats membres comme ceux-ci considèrent opportun.

La discussion qui a précédé l'adoption des conclusions peut être résumée comme suit : six Etats membres (DK, D, I, NL, B, L) soutiennent pleinement la proposition de la Commission; la France préférerait une taxe exclusivement sur les émissions de CO2; le Royaume-Uni considère que l'idée d'une taxe "peut être explorée"; l'Irlande a une "attitude ouverte"; la Grèce aimerait avoir une taxe sur l'énergie; le Portugal s'inquiète de la répartition des charges (burden sharing), tandis que l'Espagne veut avoir une répartition de quotas d'émissions par pays et habitant équitable.

Athènes,


C. STATHOPOULOS