



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



7926/08 (Presse 87)

**PRESS RELEASE**

2862nd Council meeting

**Agriculture and Fisheries**

Luxembourg, 14 April 2008

President      **Mr Iztok JARC,**  
Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Food of Slovenia.

**P R E S S**

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Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 5389 / 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026  
[press.office@consilium.europa.eu](mailto:press.office@consilium.europa.eu) <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom>

7926/08 (Presse 87)

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## **Main results of the Council**

*The Council adopted a regulation adjusting **Poland's fishing quotas for Baltic Sea cod** over a four-year period, so as to compensate for over-fishing by Polish fishermen in 2007.*

*The regulation requires Poland to "pay back" 10% of the exceeded quotas in 2008, and a further 30% in each of the years 2009, 2010 and 2011, in such a way as to avoid socio-economic consequences in the Polish fishing industry.*

*The Council adopted a directive on ambient **air quality** and cleaner air, accepting all amendments voted by the European Parliament in second reading, following an agreement reached between Parliament and Council. The directive is intended to provide, in particular, better protection from the negative health effects of fine dust particles.*

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
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## PARTICIPANTS

The governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

### Belgium:

Ms Sabine LARUELLE

Minister for Economic Affairs, the Self-Employed and Agriculture

Mr Kris PEETERS

Minister-President of the Flemish Government and Flemish Minister for Institutional Reform, Ports, Agriculture, Sea Fisheries and Rural Policy

### Bulgaria:

Mr Nihat Tahir KABIL

Minister for Agriculture and Food Supply

### Czech Republic:

Mr Ivo HLAVÁČ

First Deputy Minister for Agriculture

### Denmark:

Ms Kjer Eva HANSEN

Minister for Food

### Germany:

Mr Gert LINDEMANN

State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection

### Estonia:

Mr Jaanus TAMKIVI

Minister for the Environment

### Ireland:

Ms Mary COUGHLAN

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Mr John BROWNE

Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (with special responsibility for Fisheries)

### Greece:

Mr Alexandros CONTOS

Minister for Rural Development and Food

### Spain:

Mr Josep PUXEU

Secretary General for agriculture and food, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Mr Juan Carlos MARTIN FRAGUEIRO

Secretary General for Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Ms Pilar MERINO TRONCOSO

Minister for Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Agriculture of the Autonomous Community of Canary Islands

### France:

Mr Michel BARNIER

Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries

### Italy:

Mr Paolo DE CASTRO

Minister for Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policy

### Cyprus:

Mr Panicos POUROS

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment

### Latvia:

Mr Mārtiņš ROZE

Minister for Agriculture

### Lithuania:

Mr Kazys SIVICKIS

Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Agriculture

### Luxembourg:

Mr Fernand BODEN

Minister for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development, Minister for Small and Medium-sized Businesses, the Liberal Professions and the Self-Employed, Tourism and Housing  
State Secretary for Relations with Parliament, State Secretary for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural

Ms Octavie MODERT

**Hungary:**

Mr Barnabás FORGÁCS

Development, State Secretary for Culture, Higher Education and Research

**Malta:**

Mr George PULLICINO

Secretary of State, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

**Netherlands:**

Ms Gerda VERBURG

Minister for Rural Affairs and the Environment

**Austria:**

Mr Walter GRAHAMMER

Mr Martin HAUER

Deputy Permanent Representative  
Member of Cabinet of Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, the Environment and Water Management**Pologne:**

Mr Kazimierz Florian PLOCKE

State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

**Portugal:**

Mr Jaime SILVA

Mr Luís VIEIRA

Minister for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries  
State Secretary for Agriculture and Fisheries, attached to the Minister for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries**Romania:**

Mr Marius HIRTE

Deputy Permanent Representative

**Slovenia:**

Mr Iztok JARC

Ms Branka TOME

Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Food  
State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food**Slovakia:**

Mr Peter JAVORČÍK

Deputy Permanent Representative

**Finland:**

Ms Sirkka-Liisa ANTILA

Minister for Agriculture and Forestry

**Sweden:**

Mr Eskil ERLANDSSON

Minister for Agriculture

**United Kingdom:**

Lord Geoff ROOKER

Minister of State for Sustainable Food and Farming and Animal Health

Mr Michael RUSSELL

Scottish Minister for Environment

**Commission:**

Ms Mariann FISCHER BOEL

Member

Mr Joe BORG

Member

Ms Androulla VASSILIOU

Member

**ITEMS DEBATED****COD FISHING QUOTAS FOR POLAND**

The Council adopted a regulation adjusting Poland's fishing quotas for the 2008 to 2011 period for Baltic Sea cod in subdivisions 25-32 ([doc. 7827/08 + COR 1](#)).

The regulation provides for a "payback" over four years to compensate for over-fishing by Polish fishermen in 2007. Poland will pay back 10% of the exceeded quota in 2008 and a further 30% in each of the years 2009, 2010 and 2011, in such a way as to avoid socio-economic consequences in the Polish fishing industry.

The payback is conditional on Poland taking action to control fishing and to reduce the overcapacity of its fishing fleet, including new provisions on the monitoring of quotas, the scrapping of the cod fleet and/or its transfer, even partially, to the fishing of pelagic species. Progress towards these objectives will be subject to annual review.

The regulation is aimed at implementing statements made when total allowable catches and fishing quotas for the Baltic Sea were adopted for 2008.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See press release 15333/07 and doc. 14639/07.

## **ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING**

The Council held a policy debate on a proposed regulation aimed at establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

It requested the permanent representatives committee to oversee further work on the regulation, taking account of the remarks made by delegations.

The debate focused on three questions:

- the scope of the regulation, and in particular whether it should apply to Community vessels, which are already subject to a comprehensive control regime, or only to third country vessels;
- the administrative burden that a proposed import certification procedure would entail, and possible alternative methods or measures to prevent imports of illegal, unreported and unregulated fish products;
- the suitability of proposed sanctions, and concerns that, for example, the proposed harmonisation could encroach upon member states' legal prerogatives.

The proposal, presented by the Commission at the Council's meeting last November<sup>1</sup>, builds upon measures the EU has been taking for more than ten years to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, guided since 2002 by a Community action plan ([doc. 9399/02](#))<sup>2</sup>. But whilst existing measures focus mainly on the control of activities at sea, the new regulation would cover the entire supply chain (harvesting, transshipment, processing, landings and trade).

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<sup>1</sup> See press release 15333/07.

<sup>2</sup> See also Council conclusions of 7 June 2002, doc. 9528/02.



The business of illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries is equivalent to the world's second-largest fisheries producer, with an estimated market value of more than EUR 10 billion. It causes important damage to the legal fishing industry, jeopardises the sustainability of fish stocks and constitutes a threat to the marine environment by the use of prohibited fishing methods and the non-respect of protected zones. Moreover, coastal communities in developing countries suffer from the plundering of resources that are vital to them.

## **RECOVERY PLAN FOR COD STOCKS**

The Council took note of the presentation by commissioner Joe Borg of a proposed regulation aimed at strengthening a recovery plan for cod stocks. It held an exchange of views.

It requested the permanent representatives committee to oversee detailed examination of the text.

The recovery plan, established in 2004 under regulation 423/2004, is aimed at ensuring the reconstitution of cod stocks within a ten-year period to precautionary levels advised by scientists.

The proposal, approved by the Commission on 2 April, is intended to improve several aspects of the plan, given that cod stocks remain under severe pressure (*doc.* [7676/08](#)).

The main proposed changes are as follows:

- revision of the plan's long-term objectives, so as to take account of the effects of global warming on ocean conditions;
- inclusion of an objective on fishing mortality;

- simplified and more efficient implementation of a management system to regulate fishing effort;
- a modulated approach for the adjustment of fishing opportunities where recovery is already achieved for a given stock;
- measures to reduce cod discards and to encourage fishermen to engage in cod-avoidance programmes;
- inclusion of the Celtic Sea in the recovery plan.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea has indicated that reductions in cod catches have so far failed to enable the recovery of four cod stocks covered by regulation 423/2004, in the Kattegat, in the North Sea (including the Skagerrak and the eastern Channel), in waters to the west of Scotland and in the Irish Sea.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### ***– Common fisheries policy - Action plan for simplifying and improving the CFP***

The Council was briefed by commissioner Joe Borg on progress with simplification initiatives for the common fisheries policy (CFP) established under the 2006-2008 CFP action plan.

A review of progress in simplifying the CFP takes place during each six-month presidency. The action plan follows on from a 2003 agreement between the EU's institutions on "*better lawmaking*", which provided the framework for simplifying Community legislation.

### ***– Mauritania - Fisheries partnership agreement***

The Council took note of an intervention by commissioner Joe Borg regarding the initialling of a new protocol to the EU-Mauritania fisheries partnership agreement, setting out the fishing opportunities for EU fishing fleets and the financial contribution for the period from 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2012.

Commissioner Borg also highlighted the need to accelerate procedures to ratify the protocol in order to respect the deadline for paying the Community's financial contribution.

### ***– Bluefin tuna***

The Council was briefed by commissioner Joe Borg on implementation of the bluefin tuna recovery plan for 2008, especially as regards controls.

The recovery plan, adopted in November 2006 by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT), has been in force since June 2007. The Community implemented it in December 2007 by establishing a multi-annual recovery plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean under regulation 1559/2007. A review of the ICCAT recovery plan is expected during the annual ICCAT meeting in November.

The plan stipulates a progressive reduction of total allowable catches of bluefin tuna and various technical measures, such as seasonal closures of the fishery and minimum landing sizes, as well as a new general reporting and control system to eradicate illegal fishing. In 2007, however, the Community was unable to fully implement the plan and had to declare over-fishing to ICCAT; this year will therefore be crucial for the conservation of bluefin tuna.

– *Celtic cod*

The Council discussed, at the request of the French delegation, the follow-up to a commitment made by the Commission at the Council's meeting on 17-19 December to review total allowable catches agreed for 2008 for Celtic cod in ICES<sup>1</sup> areas VIIb to VIIk, VIII, IX and X.

– *World trade negotiations - Doha Development Agenda*

The Council was briefed by commissioner Mariann Fischer-Boel on latest developments in negotiations on agricultural issues under the WTO's Doha Development Agenda, following bilateral contacts amongst the main parties over the past few weeks and in the run-up to a possible WTO ministerial meeting in Geneva next month.

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<sup>1</sup> International Council for the Exploration of the Sea

It held an exchange of views.

– ***Food security and the challenges of climate change and bio-energy - FAO conference***

The Council was briefed by the presidency on preparations for a high-level conference on world food security and the challenges of climate change and bio-energy, to be organised by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation in Rome from 3 to 5 June ([doc. 8165/08](#)).

For further information: <http://www.fao.org/foodclimate/>

– ***FAO regional conference for Europe***

The Council was briefed by the Austrian delegation on preparations for the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's 26th regional conference for Europe, to be held in Innsbruck on 26-27 June ([doc. 8201/08](#)).

The conference will focus on adaptation to climate change and the promotion of traditional regional agricultural products and food.

– ***Restrictions on the movement of cattle and sheep infected with bluetongue***

The Council was briefed by the Portuguese delegation on its plans to lift its national restrictions on imports from other member states of cattle and sheep infected with bluetongue, in the light of new requirements to be imposed at Community level ([doc. 8290/08](#)).

– *Chemical decontamination of fresh meat*

The Council took note of an intervention by the French delegation concerning the Commission's intention to authorise the chemical decontamination of fresh meat ([doc. 8310/08](#)).

– *Situation in the pork market*

The Council discussed, at the request of the French delegation, continuing difficulties in the pigmeat sector.

– *Wine fraud in Italy*

The Council was briefed by the Italian delegation on a recent case of fraud in the wine sector in Italy.

– *Swine fever in Slovakia*

The Council was informed by the Commission of measures taken in reaction to a case of swine fever in Slovakia.

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED****AGRICULTURE****Common market organisation - Incorporation of new provisions**

The Council adopted a regulation amending regulation 1234/2007, which replaced the different regulations on common market organisations (CMO) with a single common organisation for all agricultural markets. ([7354/1/08](#))

The amending regulation incorporates recently adopted provisions for sugar, seeds, milk and milk products, beef and veal and for the fruit and vegetables sector into the single CMO and repeals an important number of obsolete regulations in the fruit and vegetables sector. By doing so, it contributes to further regulatory simplification and helps ensure legal certainty.

**Cane sugar prices - Negotiations with ACP states and India**

The Council authorised the Commission to open negotiations with ACP producer states and with India on guaranteed prices applicable to cane sugar from these countries in the delivery periods from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 and from 1 July 2009 to 30 September 2009.

Under the sugar protocol to the ACP-EC partnership agreement and the EEC-India cane sugar agreement, the Community undertakes to purchase and import quantities of sugar at guaranteed prices. These prices have to be negotiated annually, within the price range obtained in the Community, taking into account all relevant economic factors.



**COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY****Iraq – EU integrated rule-of-law mission**

The Council adopted a joint action extending and amending the mandate of the EU integrated rule-of-law mission for Iraq, EUJUST LEX (7844/08).

The joint action extends joint action 2005/190/CFSP on EUJUST LEX until 30 June 2008, and amends its budget so as to cover the expenditure for the period until that date. The total amount from March 2005 to 30 June 2008 is EUR 21.2 million.

Established to strengthen the rule of law and promote a culture of respect for human rights in Iraq, EUJUST LEX provides professional development opportunities to senior Iraqi officials from the criminal justice system. Member states provide courses which offer learning opportunities and demonstrate best practice in the rule of law. The aim is to foster confidence, mutual respect and operational cooperation between the different branches of the Iraqi criminal justice system (police, judiciary and penitentiary).

More information on EUJUST LEX can be found at:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/eujust-lex>

## **Weapons of mass destruction - EU support to international organisations**

### *- International Atomic Energy Agency - Nuclear security and verification*

The Council adopted a joint action in support of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the areas of nuclear security and verification (8093/1/08). It ensures continuity of cooperation between the EU and the IAEA and builds on the work achieved under previous joint actions.

The EU will support IAEA activities through projects aimed at:

- strengthening national legislative and regulatory infrastructures for the implementation of relevant international instruments in the areas of nuclear security and verification;
- assisting third countries in strengthening the security and control of radioactive materials; and
- strengthening third countries' capabilities for detection and response to illicit trafficking in radioactive materials.

The EU will contribute EUR 7.7 million to the implementation of these projects. It remains a key donor of the IAEA nuclear security fund.

### *- World Health Organisation - Bio-safety and bio-security*

The Council adopted a joint action in support of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in the area of laboratory bio-safety and bio-security (7871/08).

Under this joint action the EU will contribute to the implementation of the biological and toxin weapons convention (BTWC) through activities related to the safety and security of biological agents and toxins, with a view to preventing unauthorised access to and use of such agents and toxins for malicious purposes.

The projects will address the following areas of concern for the accidental and deliberate spread of diseases:

- the risk of terrorists having access to dangerous biological pathogens/toxins;
- the respect of bio-safety and bio-security standards in laboratories; and
- the prevention of laboratory incidents and accidental releases of dangerous bio-materials due to inadequate practices in laboratories and other facilities, and lack of compliance with United Nations regulations on infectious substance packaging and shipping.

The EU will contribute EUR 2.1 million to the implementation of these projects.

The joint action implements the Council's common position 2006/242/CFSP relating to the 2006 BTWC review conference, which encouraged its members to continue strengthening international organizations and networks working on infectious diseases, including the WHO.

## European Security and Defence College

The Council took note of a report on the activities and prospects of the European Security and Defence College (ESDC). The report identifies key issues and existing areas of deficiency, sets out practical measures on how to overcome them and makes suggestions with a view to the forthcoming revision of the Council joint action ([16846/07](#)).

The ESDC is organised as a network between national institutes, colleges, academies and institutions within the EU dealing with security and defence policy issues and the EU Institute for Security Studies (EU ISS). The ESDC's mission and objectives are to provide training in the field of European security and defence policy (ESDP) at the strategic level in order to:

- develop and promote a common understanding of ESDP among civilian and military personnel;
- identify and disseminate, through its training activities, best practice in relation to various ESDP issues;
- further enhance the European security culture within ESDP;
- provide EU instances, member states' administrations and staff with knowledgeable personnel familiar with EU policies, institutions and procedures; and
- help promote professional relations and contacts among training participants.

More information on the ESDC can be found at:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/esdc>

**JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS****SISNET budget - Participation of Switzerland**

The Council adopted a decision amending decision 2000/265/EC on the establishment of a financial regulation governing the budgetary aspects of the management of contracts relating to the SISNET (installation and the functioning of the communication infrastructure for the Schengen environment) ([7791/08](#)) with a view to Switzerland's participation in the Schengen acquis.

**DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION****Republic of Guinea - Respect for democratic principles**

The Council adopted a decision extending for one year the monitoring period as regards cooperation with the Republic of Guinea on the basis of the ACP-EU partnership agreement, so as to enable the Guinean authorities to fulfil undertakings given concerning the respect for democratic principles ([7500/08](#)).

The Council decided in 2005 to take measures, including the suspension of development cooperation, after consultations under article 96 of the ACP-EU agreement following a deterioration in the democratic environment in Guinea. In the course of time, in response to progress in the country, support under the European Development Fund has been reestablished.

The 2005 Council decision also provided for a monitoring period that ended on 14 April. During this period, a reinforced political dialogue with Guinea took place. The political dialogue allowed, in view of the progress made, the release to Guinea of EUR 85.8 million from the 9th European Development Fund at the end of 2006.

Subsequent EU follow-up missions confirmed that the measures carried out by the Guinean authorities are proceeding in a generally positive manner, particularly in terms of the electoral process, strongly backed by the EU, and in the field of macro-economic policies. However, the organisation of parliamentary elections, including fixing a date, which is one of the main undertakings given by the Guinean government, has not yet been finalised.

The Council will review the decision in the light of progress.

### **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development**

The Council took note of the state of play of preparations for the 12th session of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XII), which will take place in Accra, Ghana, from 20 to 25 April 2008.

The main theme of the conference is "Addressing the opportunities and challenges of globalization for development"<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unctadxii.org/en/>

Last October, the Council set out the EU's key objectives and priorities for UNCTAD XII ([14209/07](#)). The EU's main areas of priority over the coming four years are: south-south trade and regional integration, commodities and trade in natural resources, investment and competition, strengthening UNCTAD through reform, and paying special attention to Africa and the least developed countries.

### **TRADE POLICY**

#### **Plurilateral anti-counterfeiting trade agreement**

The Council authorised the Commission to open negotiations on a plurilateral anti-counterfeiting trade agreement.

### **STATISTICS**

#### **Community statistics on the structure and activity of foreign affiliates**

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a draft measure proposed by the Commission implementing and amending regulation 716/2007 on Community statistics on the structure and activity of foreign affiliates.

## **Statistics on income and living conditions \***

The Council adopted a regulation implementing regulation 1177/2003 concerning Community statistics on income and living conditions as regards the 2009 list of target secondary variables on material deprivation ([7172/08](#), [7643/08 ADD1](#)).

This implementing regulation is part of an effort to better monitor the multi-dimensional nature and the non-income dimension of poverty and social exclusion by developing appropriate statistical tools.

The general common framework for the systematic production of Community statistics on income and living conditions was established by regulation 1177/2003. It provides for comparable and timely cross-sectional and longitudinal data on income and on the level and composition of poverty and social exclusion at national and EU levels.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **Air quality**

The Council adopted a directive aimed at improving ambient air quality across Europe, approving all amendments voted by the European Parliament in second reading ([3696/1/07](#) and [7690/1/08 ADD1](#)).



The directive stresses the importance of combating emissions of pollutants at source and identifying and implementing emission reduction measures at local, national and Community level.

More specifically, the directive lays down measures aimed at:

- establishing objectives for ambient air quality designed to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and on the environment;
- assessing the ambient air quality in the EU on the basis of common methods and criteria;
- obtaining information on ambient air quality in order to monitor long-term trends and improvements, and ensuring that such information is made available to the public;
- maintaining air quality where it is good, and improving it in other cases;
- promoting increased cooperation between EU countries in reducing air pollution.

The new measures have been designed to combat emissions of harmful air pollutants, taking into account latest health and scientific developments and experience gained, as well as relevant World Health Organisation standards, guidelines and programmes.

While covering all major air pollutants, the directive pays special attention to particulates and ground-level ozone pollution because of their danger for human health. The new provisions seek to achieve a general reduction of concentrations of fine particulates, known as PM<sub>2.5</sub>, in the urban environment in order to ensure that large sections of the population benefit from improved air quality.

The new directive is also intended to provide greater clarity, simplicity and efficiency by replacing five existing legal instruments: the directive on ambient air quality assessment and management (96/62/EC); the directive on limit values for sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and oxides of nitrogen, particulate matter and lead (1999/30/EC); the directive on limit values for benzene and carbon monoxide (2000/69/EC); the directive on ozone (2002/3/EC); and the decision on exchange of information from stations measuring ambient air pollution (97/101/EC).

The directive is part of the EU's strategy on air pollution which is aimed at reducing the number of premature deaths from air pollution-related diseases by 40% by 2020 from the 2000 level, as well as reducing damage to forests and ecosystems from airborne pollutants.

## **CULTURE**

### **Euro-Mediterranean partnership - Conference of ministers of culture**

The Council adopted EU guidelines in preparation for the conclusions of a conference of the ministers of culture of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership that will take place in Athens on 29 and 30 May 2008.

The text will be forwarded to the Mediterranean partner countries and will be finalized after negotiations with them.

### **APPOINTMENTS**

#### **European Economic and Social Committee**

The Council adopted a decision appointing for the remainder of the current term of office, which ends on 20 September 2010 Ms Heidi LOUGHEED as member.

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