



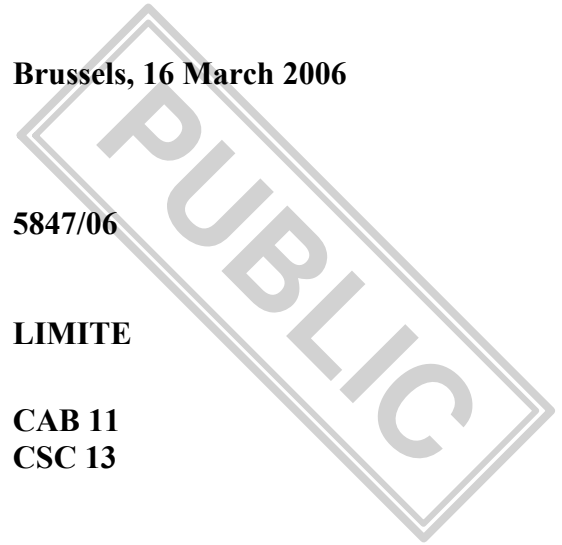
**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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LIMITE

**CAB 11
CSC 13**



INFORMATION NOTE

From : The General Secretariat
To : Delegations
Subject : Handling of documents marked LIMITE

1. As far as distribution and handling is concerned, Council documents fall into three categories:
 - (i) Documents which bear no distribution or classification marking, and which are therefore automatically accessible to the public;
 - (ii) Documents which are classified and bear one of the four classification markings set out in the Council Security Regulations (TRÈS SECRET UE/EU TOP SECRET, SECRET UE, CONFIDENTIEL UE or RESTREINT UE); and
 - (iii) Documents whose distribution is internal to the Council, its members, the Commission and certain other EU institutions and bodies. Such official Council documents bear the distribution marking "LIMITE" on the front page, and in the footer of all subsequent pages. Note that "LIMITE" is a distribution marking, and not a classification level.
2. Documents marked LIMITE may be given to any member of a national administration of a Member State and the Commission. Certain LIMITE documents may be given to acceding States and to other EU institutions and bodies, depending on the "code matière" on the front page of the document. LIMITE documents may not be given to any other person, the media or the general public without specific authorisation (see below).

3. No technical protection measures need to be applied to protect documents marked LIMITE when handled or transmitted by IT systems or networks¹.
4. However, the following procedural rules apply to LIMITE documents:
 - the content of LIMITE documents must not be published, either by read or by download access, in the Internet on a website that is accessible by any Internet user;
 - when sending LIMITE documents by e-mail, special care should be taken to ensure that e-mails are only sent to recipients entitled to receive them;
 - LIMITE documents do not require any specific physical protection measures, other than not distributing them to persons not entitled to receive them;
 - LIMITE documents may be disposed of without any requirement for physical destruction.
5. LIMITE documents may only be released to representatives of third States or international organisations by decision of the Council, or by persons duly authorised to release such documents under a Council decision.
6. LIMITE Council documents may only be made public by decision of the competent Council officials, or, where relevant, by decision of the Council, on the basis of criteria laid down in Regulation (EC) 1049/2001 and in the Council's rules of procedure. Staff of a national administration or the Commission may not themselves decide to make LIMITE documents public. The Secretariat is examining ways of marking the electronic version of all official documents automatically sent to each delegation to allow identification of the source of any leaks.

¹ Other than the requirement set out in Section XI (2) of the Council Security Regulations for all systems to protect the integrity and availability of those systems and the information they contain.