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Brussels,

Dear Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Dear Chair of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs,
Dear Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights,

Thank you for your continued interest and constructive exchange of views on the engagement of the European Union in Libya, including the migration-related assistance. Following the various queries about the matter, please find below a state of play of the European Union's policy on migration in Libya.

As you are aware, the situation in Libya remains complex. In line with the strategic guidance of the European Council, the Commission aims to support Libya's transition towards state building, stabilisation, reconstruction, and reconciliation. It includes institutional support and technical assistance in key sectors, such as democratic governance, the rule of law and human rights, civil society, health, economic development, and migration. We also support the engagement of women and youth, health, as well as climate and environment protection. EU actions in Libya focus on stabilising the country so it can be a prosperous and secure country, in line with the aspirations of Libyans.

The situation across the Central Mediterranean migratory routes remains complex.

According to the UN Agencies, in 2023 (as of end of October), 12 635 people were rescued at sea by the Libyan authorities. In October 2023, 2 275 interceptions, and at least 126 arrests of smugglers and facilitators were carried out.

Mr David McALLISTER
Member of the European Parliament, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

Mr Juan LÓPEZ AGUILAR
Member of the European Parliament, Chair of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Mr Udo BULLMANN
Member of the European Parliament, Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights



Until the end of October, the total number of voluntary returns from Libya were 1 910 through the EU-supported assisted voluntary return programme.

At the same time, according to the IOM, 2 066 people have been reported dead or missing while crossing the Central Mediterranean Sea in 2023 as of 5 September. In August we were confronted with a new worrying trend, with arrivals from Cyrenaica registering a substantial increase. Currently we are registering that the majority of arrivals from Libya are departing from Tripolitania. Arrivals from Cyrenaica have increased by 12% (compared to the same period last year), while arrivals from Tripolitania are almost reaching the same levels as last year. In October, the departures from Cyrenaica slowed down considerably and the departures of about 200 per day originated from Tripolitania.

Moreover, 64 migrants have also been reportedly missing while crossing the Sahara in 2023 so far, and 212 migrants were reported missing in 2022¹.

The latest shipwrecks are yet another call for action, highlighting the urgency to intensify our work with countries of origin and transit, including with Libya. Far too many people still use Libya as a departure point for life-threatening trips across the Mediterranean. As requested by the European Council and as foreseen by the EU Action Plan on Central Mediterranean, the priority is to save lives and fight the smuggling networks who take advantage of peoples' despair. To this end, we are using all the tools at our disposal, in line with the whole-of-route approach for engaging and creating new opportunities for coordination with partner countries.

In this context, and following the strategic guidance of the European Council, we are engaging in a comprehensive, balanced approach with the Libyan authorities in order to build capacities for an effective border management, save lives at sea, fight the smuggling and human trafficking networks, and increase protection of migrants and refugees, in line with international standards and human rights. Over the last years, we have implemented a number of programmes across all pillars of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. Such programmes have been funded under the North Africa window of the 'European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa)'. Additional programmes are currently being contracted under the NDICI-Global Europe Instrument. In Libya, the European Commission works together with various implementing partners, including UN and EU Member States' agencies as well as with international NGOs.

The funding allocated to Libya over the period 2014-2020 amounted to over EUR 560 million, Libya being the biggest beneficiary country under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa North Africa window with a total of EUR 465 million. Over half of the funding has supported the protection of migrants and refugees, one third to community stabilisation in Libyan municipalities, alongside actions for border management. Our assistance also includes the provision of equipment and training, in full respect of international standards and human rights. To this end, new and refurbished Search and Rescue vessels have been recently handed over to the Libyan Coast Guard, following the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and Libya, which includes safeguards on the respect of human rights and monitoring of the use of the vessels. In addition, EUR 11.86 million have been allocated for Libya under the Regional Development and Protection Program for North Africa (AMIF/Asylum Migration and Integration Fund) for actions such as awareness raising campaigns, capacity building, infrastructure works and resettlement related activities.

¹ Information provided by IOM: <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/data>

All our programmes in Libya follows the basic principle of 'do-no-harm', through a conflict sensitivity and rights-based approach, and abide by human rights, due diligence, and restrictive measures. Our contracts serve to ensure that funds provided are used exclusively for agreed purposes. In addition, the Commission also conducts evaluation and monitoring missions. A third-party monitoring system is also in place, which focuses on the respect of the 'do-no-harm' principle.


Undeniably, the situation in Libya poses many challenges. Nevertheless, despite the potential risks when implementing programmes in Libya, the Commission is convinced that halting EU assistance in the country or disengagement would not improve the situation of those most in need. This approach is also in line with the recent decisions of the European Council on the external dimension of migration.

The Commission remains available for continued exchanges on the matter.


Yours sincerely,



Margaritis Schinas



Ylva Johansson



Olivér Várhelyi