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Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on Migration adopted by the Council at its 3416th meeting held on 12 October 2015.

Council conclusions on Migration

Foreign Affairs Council, 12 October 2015

1. The unprecedented migratory and refugee crisis that the EU is now facing has witnessed a sharp increase of mixed migratory flows along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans, in parallel with a constant flow along the Central Mediterranean route. The Western Balkans have been under increasing pressure while other partners and neighbouring countries¹ of the EU have been bearing the brunt of the crisis, particularly Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, which are hosting the vast majority of Syrian refugees and Iraqi Internally Displaced Persons.

2. The crises in and beyond our neighbourhood are at the very heart of forced displacement, exacerbated by other negative factors such as poverty, violations of human rights and poor socio-economic development, and confirm the need of a comprehensive and balanced external migration and asylum policy for the EU. In this respect, the Council welcomes the Joint Communication of the HRVP and the Commission of 9 September on "Addressing the Refugee Crisis in Europe: The role of EU External Action", and the actions outlined thereof as a basis for further work. In this context, the Council reaffirms its full commitment to human rights, including to the situation of women and girls as well as other vulnerable persons and groups.

¹ The use of the term 'countries' or 'borders' in Council conclusions does not imply recognition of statehood.

3. The Council confirms its commitment to mobilise all appropriate instruments and policies and support efforts to address the root causes of migratory flows, in particular conflicts, political instability, human rights violations, poor socio-economic development, including lack of employment opportunities, poor governance and climate change. In this regard, the Council continues to support diplomatic initiatives by the UN to find solutions to the conflicts in Syria and Libya, underpinned by efforts of the HRVP, the Commission and Member States.
4. The Council reaffirms the importance of close cooperation with first countries of asylum, countries of origin and transit to jointly address this common challenge.

In this regard, the Council recalls actions undertaken by the HRVP, the Commission and Member States to step up support to Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey as well as the Western Balkans. The Council welcomes the results of the High Level Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean / Western Balkans route on 8 October 2015 in Luxembourg, endorses its Declaration and calls for its swift and full implementation and follow up.

5. The Council considers essential to step-up EU-Turkey cooperation on support of refugees and migration and looks forward to an agreement with Turkey as part of a comprehensive agenda based on mutual commitments. The Council supports the ongoing work aiming at setting up an Action Plan and looks forward to discussing it with a view to reaching an agreement on it.
6. The Council welcomes the decision to substantially increase the funding of the EU Regional Trust Fund recently established in response to the Syrian crisis (the "Madad Fund") with over 500 EUR million in EU funding to be matched by efforts from EU Member States and other countries. The extension of its scope to the Western Balkans is being proposed.

7. The Council recalls the importance to engage in a comprehensive dialogue with African countries of origin and transit in order to jointly manage migration and asylum flows in the spirit of partnership, ownership and shared responsibility. In this regard, the Council welcomes the efforts by the Presidents of the European Council, the Commission and the Presidency of the Council of the EU, in close cooperation with the HRVP, in preparation of the Valletta Summit on 11 and 12 November and encourages all those involved to find comprehensive and balanced solutions and make substantial progress on all priority domains of the draft Action Plan. The Council looks forward to an early finalisation of the draft Action Plan and underlines the importance of participation at the highest levels on both sides.
8. In this context, the Council calls for a closer engagement with African partners through the EU-Africa Migration and Mobility continental dialogue, the EU's regional strategies (Sahel, Horn of Africa, Gulf of Guinea) and dialogues (Rabat, Khartoum) and the Cotonou Partnership Agreement in view of tackling jointly current challenges through humanitarian aid, development policy and assistance as well as efforts aiming at ensuring stability and strengthening resilience. It further welcomes the progress made towards the setting up of an Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced people in Africa; and recalls the need to increase its funding through additional contributions by Member States.
9. The Council encourages the ongoing High Level Dialogues on migration with key countries along the main migratory routes to Europe as pursued by the HRVP and other relevant Commissioners, in close cooperation with Member States. These high-level dialogues on the broad agenda on migration and asylum should be carried out in a spirit of partnership and should help identify leverage and enhance cooperation, in particular on readmission. All tools shall be mobilised to increase cooperation on return and readmission, thus giving readmission a central place in all dialogues with countries of origin of irregular migrants.

The Council reiterates its call on the Commission, together with the EEAS, to propose, within six months, comprehensive and tailor-made packages to reinforce overall cooperation with third-countries in order to implement effectively readmission and returns. These dialogues will be also key instrument to pursue further implementation of the outcomes achieved in the Luxembourg High Level Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean/Western Balkans route and the Valetta Summit.

In this regard, it takes note in particular of the HRVP's fruitful discussions with the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the G5 Sahel on 17 June and with Niger on 17-18 September, with Senegal and Ethiopia in the margins of the UNGA in New York on 29 September as well as the forthcoming discussions again with Ethiopia and the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa on 20 October.

10. The Council welcomes the swift deployment of European Migration Liaison Officers in EU Delegations which will be an important contribution to the cooperation with key partners.
11. The Council welcomes the enhanced support to UNHCR, WFP and other programmes and specialised agencies as decided by the extraordinary European Council of 23 September. In this respect and as set out in the Commission's Communication of 9 September, it calls for the further reinforcement of cooperation with key international partners and with the United Nations, in particular UNHCR, UN OCHA, UNDP, as well as with organisations such as the IOM and the ICRC. In that regard, the European Union calls on the international community to step up its efforts in addressing the current crisis.
12. The Council reiterates that the fight against criminal networks of traffickers and smugglers remains a priority and welcomes the transition to the second phase of EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA on the high seas, as laid down in point (b)(i) of Article 2(2) of Decision (CFSP) 2015/778, which is an important and timely step in disrupting the migrant smuggler's business model, and welcomes the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2240 on 9 October. The Council invites the HRVP to continue work in order to allow the transition to the successive phases of the operation.

13. The Council equally welcomes the reinforcement of EUCAP Sahel Niger that is enabling further the crucial work done to support the Nigerien authorities to prevent, control and manage irregular migration through Niger and in particular in Agadez, together with the quickly setting up of the pilot multi-purpose centre and the support to the Niger Government. In this framework, ways to reinforce the EUCAP Sahel missions could be explored.
14. The Council underlines that a solution to the Libyan conflict remains crucial to any effort in addressing migratory flows through the Central Mediterranean and recalls that the EU stands ready to resume support to the Libyan authorities to address irregular migration, especially in the area of border management and the fight against trafficking of human beings.
15. The Council supports the HRVP and the Commission in their continued work to implement swiftly the above agenda, in close cooperation with Member States, and calls on them to continue to reinforce the external dimension of the EU migration policy, including through engaging with other partners of the international community and stepping up cooperation with third countries of origin and transit.
