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De: Présidence

A: Délégations

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Sujet: Fiche Action - Mauritanie – Renforcement de la coopération avec l'agence Frontex

Les délégations trouveront ci-joint la "fiche action sur la Mauritanie: renforcement de la coopération avec l'agence Frontex" (en anglais).

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Mécanisme opérationnel de coordination des actions pour la dimension externe des migrations

MOCADEM

Action file

**Mauritania - Strengthening
cooperation with Frontex**

8 June 2022

Specific objectives

~~At the same time, initiate a reflection within the competent Council bodies on how to orientate this cooperation within the framework of an overall strengthening of the EU's relations with Mauritania on all aspects of migration and mobility.~~

At the same time, Dd develop the lines of cooperation to enable the Frontex Agency to strengthen its cooperation with the Mauritanian authorities, in order to

- To establish a working arrangement between Frontex and the Mauritanian authorities as soon as possible, taking into account the wishes and reactions of the Mauritanian authorities to the ongoing exchanges.
- Taking into account Mauritania's interest and needs in terms of border management **in line with international obligations**, initiate discussions to launch, **if possible**, negotiations on a status agreement, with the objective of contributing to preventing irregular departures and combating the various forms of cross-border crime linked to irregular immigration, as well as preventing security threats relevant to the mandate of Frontex, **and strengthen a human rights based approach**.

~~At the same time, initiate a reflection within the competent Council bodies on how to orientate this cooperation within the framework of an overall strengthening of the EU's relations with Mauritania on all aspects of migration and mobility.~~

In the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the maintenance of fruitful cooperation between the EU and Mauritania appears all the more strategic in the fight against Moscow's growing influence in Africa.

Results: A first report will be prepared on progress **during the 3rd quarter of 2022.** [in July].

Actions :

Developing EU-Mauritania migration cooperation

Action 1: On the basis of the exchanges initiated and the cooperation undertaken with the Mauritanian authorities, identify the main priorities of the migration relationship. Determine the support and cooperation measures of major interest (e.g. support for the implementation of the National Migration Management Strategy, continuation of maritime strategy actions, protection of refugees and asylum seekers, support for reintegration, fight against smuggling networks, deployment of an additional surveillance and intervention unit of the "GAR-SI" type, creation of jobs for young people, involvement of the diaspora in the development of the country, etc.). Use the Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic route to coordinate cooperation projects on migration issues, including on root causes.

- **Lead actors:**
 - **Commission/EEAS:** ~~Re-launch~~Maintain a comprehensive and ~~sustained~~regular dialogue on migration and, in the context of a comprehensive review of existing relations with Mauritania and the respective interests of the EU and Mauritania, propose the main priorities for migration cooperation.
 - **Council:** Based on a Commission proposal, ~~D~~define the necessary guidelines for the migration relationship between the EU and Mauritania in the relevant working groups.
 - **Commission/SEAE/Member States:** Identify means of financial support within the framework of the funds available, and in particular the NDICI.
 - **Frontex:** following the Frontex technical mission on 17 – 18 May monitor the process of opening a Risk Analysis Cell in Nouakchott, which is expected to be operational by the end of the third quarter of 2022.
 - **Member States, notably Germany and Spain :**
 - Cooperation with UNCHR to support Mbera refugee camp
 - Strengthening Mauritanian Border Police Authority's capacities on border management with training and equipment
 - Providing support for the fight against irregular immigration to the Canary Islands, with a focus to facilitating the maritime patrolling of Mauritanian Coast Guard vessels, and maintenance and repair of the means used in maritime surveillance and control
 - Identify ongoing or future bilateral projects to address root cause issues (job creation for youth) / fight against smuggling networks / any other issue of major interest to the Mauritanian authorities.
- **Timeframe :**
 - **Q2/Q3 2022:** ~~{~~Structured discussion in the framework of the relevant Council groups on the migration relationship with Mauritania~~}~~.

Political and technical awareness

Action 2: Propose to the Mauritanian authorities the holding of an informal migration dialogue between the EU and Mauritania, focusing ~~initially~~notably on the fight against migrant smuggling and border management, in order to best determine their needs in this area and identify the possibilities for Frontex support.

- **Lead actors:**
 - **Commission, EEAS:** In the context of government renewal re-engage in a high-level discussion and :
 - Present the contours of a regular dialogue on migration and its opportunities.
 - Identify the key areas of cooperation that Frontex should develop in this framework.
 - Present the possibilities of cooperation offered by the Frontex agency.
 - **Member States:** Facilitate the establishment of such discussions.
- **Timeframe :**
 - **17-18 May:** Frontex technical mission
 - **June 2022:** Technical mission ~~in~~end of June/early July (dates to be confirmed) to the Mauritanian authorities

Progress on Finalise negotiations-discussions regarding on a working arrangement with Frontex

Action 3: On the basis of the exchanges that took place between Frontex and the Mauritanian authorities in the first ~~quarter semester~~ of 2022, ~~and depending on their interest~~, finalise the exchanges on a working arrangement with Frontex, depending on their interest to conclude it.

- **Lead actors:**

- **Commission, EEAS and EU Delegation, Member States :**
 - Support the continuation of this negotiation in contacts with the Mauritanian authorities.
- **Frontex :**
 - Identify the key elements of cooperation with Mauritania in the fight against irregular immigration and the fight against various forms of cross-border crime and terrorist threats relevant to the mandate of Frontex, within the framework of this document.
 - Progress and, if possible, finalise the discussions.
 - Launch the process to expand the mandate of the FLO posted in Senegal to also cover cooperation with Mauritania.



Timeframe :

- **Q2/Q3 2022 (estimated):** progress in the ~~negotiations-discussions~~ of the working arrangement, depending on Mauritania's interest and willingness to conclude an arrangement

Initiate work towards the negotiation of-a status agreement

Action 4: Depending on the interest shown by the Mauritanian authorities, initiate diplomatic steps to propose the negotiation and conclusion of a status agreement allowing direct operational support from Frontex at Mauritania's borders, in particular in the area of prevention of irregular departures, but also in the fight against migrant smuggling and other areas of interest to Mauritania, in the framework of the Frontex mandate.

- **Lead actors:**

- **Commission:** ~~Submit recommendations for the Council to authorise opening negotiations for a status agreement~~Propose to the Council a negotiating mandate for the conclusion of a status agreement with Mauritania, depending on their openness.
- **Council:** ~~Adopt the decision authorising the Commission to negotiate the status agreement~~ Adopt the decision giving the Commission a mandate to negotiate, sign and conclude a status agreement with Mauritania.

- **Timeframe :**

- **June 2022:** ~~Recommendations from the Commission and adoption of a decision to open negotiations for a status agreement, to be used thereafter, assuming that the exploratory talks (during the technical mission) led to a positive outcome~~Proposal and adoption of a decision to open negotiations and negotiating directives for a status agreement, assuming a positive opinion from the Mauritanian authorities.

ANNEX: Common messages

[Strengthening exchanges on migration issues]

- Underline the strategic interest of Mauritania for the EU, not only in migration, but also well beyond the migration agenda, including security, fisheries and, more recently, energy.
- Welcome the strengthening of relations between the European Union and Mauritania, which was consolidated in the framework of the discussions on the margins of the EU-AU Summit in February 2022, and emphasise the fluidity with which migration issues were addressed on that occasion.
- Underline the importance for the EU and Mauritania to ~~establish~~maintain a permanent dialogue on migration, following a holistic and human rights-based approach, in order to anchor cooperation in a jointly defined and mutually beneficial framework.
- Discuss possible opportunities for triangular cooperation between Mauritania, Algeria and the sub-Saharan countries, for example in the framework of the planned EEI for the Western Mediterranean route.

[Border Management]

- Welcome the fact that irregular departures from the Mauritanian coast (Nouadhibou in particular) to the Canary Islands have decreased, thanks in particular to the action of the Mauritanian authorities and the support of the Member States.
- Welcome the creation of a service to combat irregular immigration within the Mauritanian coastguard; Welcome the setting up of a risk analysis unit within the framework of the work carried out by the AFIC;
- However, despite these constant efforts, Mauritania remains the second most important country of departure on the Atlantic route (2,323 in 2021), which is a particularly important issue: several hundred people lose their lives each year during these crossings.
- Express the EU's willingness to strengthen its support for the Mauritanian authorities in the area of border management and the fight against migrant smuggling networks, in particular by deepening the cooperation already underway with the Frontex agency, which has a legal framework and the means to provide substantial operational support.
- Also highlight the possibility of strengthening the management of Mauritania's land borders in this way.
- Recall in this context the EU's interest in strengthening cooperation between the Mauritanian authorities and the Frontex agency, which has a legal framework and the means to provide significant operational support
- Invite the Mauritanian authorities to designate a ministerial interlocutor to lead the dialogue on the subject with the EU and to clarify the relevance of the working arrangement that can be concluded with Frontex, which was raised during the recent bilateral contacts.
- Mark the important operational interest of concluding, in the medium term, a status agreement allowing the agency to deploy assets, including vessels, surveillance equipment, and carry out operational tasks in Mauritania under the command of the national authorities.

[Identification of topics for migration cooperation].

- Underline that, in the perspective of budgetary programming, in particular that of the NDICI--Europe in the World with regard to Mauritania, the EU is determined to favour the axes of cooperation best suited to Mauritanian interests.
 - o If relevant, mention the multi-annual indicative programme for Mauritania, 125 million for the period 2021-2024 and specify the three priority areas (strengthening human development, transition to a green and blue economy, and governance including migration)

- Indicate that the EU could notably support the action of the new government in several of the most transformative areas with the greatest impact on the population, and support the stability of Mauritania through economic and social recovery.
- Indicate that most of the cooperation in the field of migration between the EU, its Member States and Mauritania will be integrated in the framework of the EEI, whose objective is to strengthen coordination, coherence and complementarities between the actions financed by the EU and its Member States in the field of migration and forced displacement.

[Readmission]

- Encourage the Mauritanian authorities to take advantage of these exchanges to identify the margins for progress in the field of readmission.
- Insist on the need to improve cooperation in the identification procedures of Mauritanian nationals staying illegally in the EU and the issuing of travel documents for return.
- Suggest extending to all EU member countries the favourable conditions enjoyed by some of them (notably, those with established bilateral cooperation).