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REMARKS

Remarks by the High Representative/Vice-president Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the briefing of the UN Security Council,

New York

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Thank you very much. First of all, let me thank not only the Presidency of the Security Council this month, but also all the European Union members of the Security Council for the excellent cooperation we have established on this issue. I think it tells a lot of the unity of purpose of Europeans, on a tragedy that is at the same time a moral and political duty, that of saving lives, and also a political investment in our collective security when it comes to dismantling smugglers' organisations and trafficking networks.

I have obviously briefed the Security Council on the recent decisions and the preparations on the next steps that are underway in the EU. I found a very high level of understanding and sharing of our concerns, of our sense of urgency, of the need to act and to act quickly and together in full cooperation, in full partnership. Not only on fighting the smugglers' organisations, but also in addressing the root causes of the phenomenon, all the way from the countries of origin, with poverty and conflicts at the basis of this phenomenon, all the way through the countries of transit up to the shores of the Mediterranean and the final, sometimes tragic, end of it.

I have had an interesting, deep, very fruitful and positive discussion with the Members of the Security Council. Later, I would expect the Security Council to work, in the coming days, for the follow-up. On our side, in the European Union, the Commission will adopt on Wednesday a new agenda for migration that will suggest proposals to solve some of the short-term and long-term issues related to migration in all its aspects - including suggestions to share responsibility within the European Union in a more effective way, but also increasing the effectiveness of legal migration ways.

I also mentioned to the Security Council that next Monday, in exactly one week from now, I will propose to the Foreign and Defence Ministers of the European Union to take the first decisions on the European Union operation to dismantle traffickers' organisations, smugglers' organisations at sea.

Thank you very much; I am ready for your questions.

Q: Russia has made quite clear that they are against any kind of destruction of these boats; I believe you were just asked about this by Russia in consultation. What was your answer, did you elaborate further on what this exact plan is? Destroying the boats on shore or do you think there is a way around this and when do you hope the SC could adopt a resolution to back this operation?

I hope as soon as possible. On destroying vessels, the crucial thing for the EU, is destroying the business model of the trafficking and smuggling organisations. Making sure that the vessels cannot be used again, making sure that the assets of these organisations are destroyed. Destroyed in a larger sense.

I think that on this, on the need to dismantle the model, dismantle the networks and their assets, there is a large consensus, about the need to act quickly, and together as an international community. One of my main messages today has been that finally the EU is realising that it has to take more responsibility in this, in a very active and big way. We are doing that. And now that same level of awareness, of the need to work together on the global scale has to be shared here, by the Security Council, by the UN system and at the international level, because this is not only a problem for the Mediterranean, this is not only an issue for the Europeans, this has to be also an issue that we need to tackle at a global level, and the UN system is for us the point of reference for that.

Q: The UN envoy said that it would be a moral failure not to concentrate on rescuing lives. I wonder if you can say whether the European Union plans to do more to step up the "search and rescue" operations and additionally, are there any plans to open up more refugee resettlement places or take in, offer more humanitarian visas for refugees seeking asylum.

As I said, the day after tomorrow, we will adopt in the Commission, in the College in Brussels, our new agenda for migration. I will not share details about that with the media before we take the formal decision in Brussels, but we are working on both elements you mentioned, yes. And I fully share the comments that were made by UN Special

Representative, when saying that we need to take also responsibility for the people we save. We are increasing our presence at sea. On this I can give you details, because the decision was already taken. We decided to triple the funding for the operations we have at sea at the moment, Triton and Poseidon, in particular. So, this means tripling the funding and the assets present at sea.

This would mean, obviously, a very strong increase of the "Search and Rescue" operations. But at the same time we have to increase the level of protection of people we save, and for this, obviously we have a European responsibility that we are ready to take. As Commission, we are advancing proposals; I hope the Member States of the European Union will support, and obviously, also in partnership with the relevant UN bodies. In particular I am working very closely with Antonio Guterres, High Commissioner for Refugees, to make sure that we work hand in hand, to not only save lives - which is objective number one for us-, but also to protect the people we save.

Q: Last week the head of the Italian Red Cross was here, Francesco Rocca, and he talked to the journalists, he had a meeting also with the Secretary-General. He was not agreeing on the fact that destroying the vessels or having as a first goal to dismantle the traffickers was going to help the people, the migrants, because this is a way to let them die, without we saving them. What is your solution? Ok, you are going to destroy those vessels, what will happen to the thousands of people that reach Libya. Francesco Rocca said that they become slaves there.

As I have said many times, and at the very beginning here, and also in the Security Council, our approach is not focusing on one aspect only. We know that we have to tackle all the aspects of this tragedy, which means first and foremost, solve the issues that are at the root causes of people fleeing, and people leaving their country: conflicts, poverty, inequalities, and violations of human rights.

Second, we have to tackle the whole route they travel, all the way. We see only the tragedy at sea, but every step of the journey is a tragedy itself. We have to work - and we are working more and more- with the countries of transit and with the UNHCR and with the IOM to make sure that people are not only intercepted but saved and taking care of all the way during the journey of desperation.

Dismantling the traffickers and the smugglers organisation is a way of saving lives. I don't believe that people are less of slaves if they are stopped or kept somewhere during the journey or locked in a boat that sinks. It's another way of not seeing people dying, also if we pretend that people are not used in an extremely cynical way by those who are making money out of the desperation. We have to face this, because this is not going to go away by itself. We have to face the reality that there are criminal organisations, criminal networks, working cross borders, with very good connections one with the other, making a lot of money that could go to finance other kind of activities and that are making people slaves out of their desperation. They sell hope, but instead of hope then they deliver death. We have to face this, otherwise we are not living up to our human dignity, for my point of view. Obviously this doesn't mean that we don't have to face also the problem of taking care of the people we save, as I've said. This is something that at the European Union level, we can do, in increasing our responsibility in welcoming refugees, in welcoming people who are fleeing. I always say, as a mother, that one could chose to leave with her daughters or with her sons, bringing all the money that a family has accumulated in maybe one or two generations, while knowing very well that you could be facing death, you and your children; this means that you have more than a strong motivation to leave. But at the same time we have to make sure that these people are not only paying money but are not also paying with their own lives in the hands of criminal organisations.

So here today what I have found is, in all the Security Council Members, a strong political will to do two things at the same time and this is exactly our approach: saving lives, on one side and dismantling the criminal organisations that organise smuggling and trafficking. The two things have to go hand in hand.

On Libya.

I have personally talked to all sides that are at the moment being involved in the Libyan dialogue. I was in Tunis to meet them ten days ago and I have discussed this directly with them and also today with the Libyan ambassador. What I see is that all sides in Libya understand that our intention is to work on this with them in partnership. Also because this is, first of all, a Libyan interest and a Libyan responsibility - to act to control that territory, to control that border and to make sure that people are not made slaves on their own territory. So dismantling these organisations is also a responsibility of the Libyan authorities. We are working hand in hand with Bernardino León to make sure that the dialogue process brings results. I have said it very clearly in the briefing to the UN Security Council, for us the real solution would be to be able to partner with a government of National Unity in Libya to allow them to control their land borders and sea borders and to work with the relevant UN organisations to make sure that refugees and migrants are being taken care of in an appropriate way. In the meantime we cannot wait, we have to seek support from the different Libyan authorities to partner with us and with the rest of the International community in saving lives and fighting the criminal organisations. The response that I have had from different interlocutors on different Libyan sides for the moment has been positive and constructive. Then, the ways in which this can be translated into the UN formulas, this is something I leave to the members of the UN Security Council itself.

Q. L'ambasciatore libico all'ONU rappresentante del governo di Tobruk, ha detto che il suo governo non è stato ancora consultato sul piano europeo. Ha in programma di incontrarlo?

L'ho già incontrato questa mattina prima della sessione del Consiglio di Sicurezza. Gli ho raccontato dei miei incontri a Tunisi qualche giorno fa che chiaramente hanno coinvolto tutte le parti in questo momento impegnate nel dialogo condotto da Bernardino León, chiarito il fatto che, come avevo già fatto nei miei colloqui 10 giorni fa, le intenzioni dell'Unione Europea sono quelle di collaborare, di lavorare insieme alle autorità libiche il più possibile, tutte le autorità libiche. Vorrei sottolineare in questo un ruolo particolare che le municipalità e i sindaci possono avere per smantellare le organizzazioni criminali per una ovvia conoscenza del territorio e anche per una vicinanza alla popolazione civile che è direttamente interessata perché non dimentichiamoci che questi sono traffici che hanno anche una ripercussione importante sulla sicurezza e la stabilità di intere comunità a livello territoriale, quindi c'è, da parte libica, per quello che io ho registrato nei miei contatti diretti, sia qui che a Tunisi 10 giorni fa, una volontà di lavorare insieme, non soltanto all'Unione Europea, ma insieme alla Comunità Internazionale. Vorrei anche dire che il lavoro in questo senso viene fatto certamente da me, da noi, ma ancora di più insieme a Bernardino León perché dev'essere chiaro a tutti a partire da tutte le parti libiche che questo lavoro rientra nel lavoro del dialogo politico che le Nazioni Unite stanno facilitando e che l'Unione Europea sostiene non soltanto convintamente ma anche molto attivamente.

Q. Sarà dell'Italia la leadership della missione libica?

Questo lo decideremo la settimana prossima a Bruxelles.

Q. Intercepting the smugglers, where do the people in the boats, refugees and migrants, will arrive, Italy or another EU country?

I said it, I hope very clearly, in the UN Security Council: no one will be sent back against their will. Our intention is to work in full respect of relevant international laws so this is clearly what it's going to happen. No push back, no one will be sent back against their will as it is already the case, now with the people we save with our operation at sea, this is for us a must.

Q. Of course, this is a long process and please, make it clear if you may. Do you need the ok to come from the Libyan government in order for the European ships to enter Libyan waters, or no? And are you discussing such an agreement or any kind of discussion with the Libyan Government on that and what's the result on this please? Thank you

Heads of States and governments stated very clearly that we will act within the international law framework. This means, in relationship, in cooperation with the Libyan authorities, and possibly with a UNSC resolution - the two of them.

Q. (unclear) What are the odds, is it important for you to get a unanimous resolution? What do you think of an opinion such as the one of Angola that think that this is a too tough and heavy military solution?

We discussed with him very openly and I think we share the view that there is not a military solution to a crisis that is not military. I am talking about a naval operation.

Q. (unclear) Do you intend to act even without a UN resolution?

There are first steps that we are planning and that could be done before a UNSC resolution - I will not go more in detail as the discussion is still ongoing in Brussels and the decision still needs to be taken by the Member States. But there are steps that we will take and we made it very clear to the Security Council Member States. There are steps that the European Union will take in full respect of international law, even before a UNSC resolution is adopted. But I am quite confident today, from the level of understanding, awareness and political will that I found here in the Security council, that it is possible to obtain a resolution in a reasonable future.

Q. Please elaborate on the resistance from Russia, and how the European Union could help overcome it?

I've not found resistance from any of the Member States of the Security Council. Obviously, there is still a lot of work to do to reach a resolution. I understand that a draft will be shared with all Members in the coming hours; this is obviously not a work for the European Union as such. You know very well that the European Union is not seating in the Security Council. But for once, we are coordinating very closely as Europeans; this makes it clear that the text that is being worked on by the Europeans, in this case, is a reflection of a common European perspective and coordinated very strongly among us and with Brussels - and is also shared by all 28 Member states of the European Union. I have not found in my discussions today - as well as I didn't find any opposition in my discussions in the previous days- both with Russians or other authorities an opposition to this. There is still a lot of work to be done on the text, on drafting a text that included the details. This is the work to be done here, but in principle, I've not found an opposition to act as I said on the two elements, of saving lives but also fighting the criminal organisations. The point of reference is and stays the one of the anti-piracy operation that received a green light from the Security Council, off the coast of Somalia.

Q. Your answer is that it is not only a military operation, that the human aspect is very important and then you say that we have to go on the root causes of people migrating, why they are leaving the country of origin. What do you say today at the United Nations in order to make the people stop leaving wherever they are leaving to their dangerous journey to go toward Libya? What will Europe do to make them stop, to protect them and help them, in their existential problem their home. What can you say now?

I'm afraid that what I can say now might not convince them to stop. Especially because the people that are leaving are

coming from crisis areas, from conflict areas. And I'm afraid that there is nothing I can say to someone leaving from Syria, or from areas of conflict nowadays. What I can say to them is we, as Europeans, I add personally, finally, understood that we have to take this seriously, and together as Europeans. On different elements - preventing and managing conflicts - the main point is Syria there, but not only. Majority of the people come from the Horn of Africa. But it is not only an issue of conflicts, it's an issue of respect of human rights, and it's an issue of inequalities and access to economic, financial and natural resources. We are increasing our work with the countries of origin, in the cases where the people are leaving the countries for poverty. We are increasing our level of cooperation with the countries of transit for the people who are leaving the countries because of war and conflict - because in that case, working with the authorities of the countries in war, doesn't really solve the problem for the people deciding to leave. The important thing is that we are increasing the level cooperation with the UNHCR to make sure that the points where these people can be welcomed and somehow addressed to, is as close as possible to the point of departure. Because the longest the trip is, the most dangerous it is for them, the more lucrative it is for the organisations and the more difficult it is to operate on this. So, what we are trying to do, is to approach as much as we can the points where people can address to, in their cases, the majority of these people are people that qualify for the international protection so the cases can be examined. And that we are increasing our presence at sea to save their lives; but this is not the solution to their problem. Their problem needs to be solved with the different global, not only European, responsibilities. Taking major responsibility in welcoming people that are getting out of crisis and conflict areas. This is going to be the solution. This is the message but it's not going to change from today to tomorrow. The point is, they have to be aware of the fact that leaving means financing criminal organisations, cynical, without any scruples, and ready to make a lot of money out of their desperation. This is the message that I feel giving to them, I think many of them know and still decide to leave. This tells us, in our part of the world, how deep our responsibility and our action have to be and most of all, how urgent it has to be dealt with. Because we cannot wait for another tragedy of major scale to happen again. That's why I came here today, second time in ten days, to pass the message to the UNSC. Europe has probably for once, waken up. We need the rest of the world to do their part as well.

Thank you very much.

Link:

- [Federica Mogherini \(European Union\) on the tragic deaths of migrants in the Mediterranean and People smuggling - Security Council Media Stakeout \(11 May 2015\)](#)

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