



Managing migration along the Central Mediterranean Route – Commission contributes to Malta discussion

Brussels, 25 January 2017

Ahead of the meeting of Heads of State and Government in Malta on 3 February 2017, the Commission and the High Representative have today set out their contribution to the discussion on how to better manage migration and save lives along the Central Mediterranean route.

The Commission and the High Representative are presenting a number of additional measures to strengthen the EU's work along this route, in particular with and around Libya. These actions are focused on fighting human smuggling and trafficking networks, helping to manage migratory flows more effectively, continuing to save lives at sea and improving the living conditions of migrants and refugees in Libya and neighbouring countries.

European Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** said: *"Too many people are still dying in the Mediterranean. We have implemented actions to address the situation but we need to do more. Today we are presenting possible short and medium term actions to address the flows to and from North Africa. First and foremost, stability in Libya and the region as a whole is required. While continuing our support to this process, we can take forward actions to help make a difference, save lives and break the smugglers' and traffickers' business model – which will also impact the flows towards Europe."*

Since 2015, the resources and assets for EU operations at sea have tripled, contributing to saving more than 400,000 people in the Mediterranean. However, the increase in migration along the Central Mediterranean route, where over 181,000 migrants and refugees arrived to the EU in 2016, has also led to record levels of loss of life at sea. To help prevent this human tragedy from continuing in 2017, the Commission and the High Representative are identifying operational, short term actions to be taken in cooperation with Member States in relation to the Central Mediterranean route. Part of a comprehensive strategy, the actions proposed take into account the wider regional context (in particular Libyan's southern border, as well as Tunisia, Egypt and Algeria) whilst putting a strong focus on Libya, representing the departure point for 90% of those seeking to travel to Europe.

Building on the European Agenda on Migration and the work undertaken under the [Migration Partnership Framework](#) aimed at strengthening cooperation on migration with partner countries, key objectives include:

- **Reducing the number of crossings and saving lives** by enhancing ongoing support, including through EUNAVFOR Operation Sophia, to the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy, including through expanding the training activities through an immediate €1 million addition to the Seahorse programme and a grant of €2.2 million under the Regional Development and Protection Programme in North Africa and establishing a Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre;
- **Stepping up the fight against smugglers and traffickers** by ensuring an operational 'Seahorse Mediterranean' Network by Spring 2017 to strengthen the border authorities of North African countries and allow better operational cooperation amongst them;
- **Protecting migrants, increasing resettlement and promoting assisted voluntary returns**, by supporting UNHCR work with the Libyan authorities to address the situation of persons in need of international protection, supporting IOM in improving the situation of migrants in Libya and expanding its assisted voluntary returns programme from Libya to countries of origin;
- **Managing migrant flows through the southern Libyan border** by deploying the full range of EU missions and projects to support the Libyan authorities in border management and migrant protection, promoting dialogue between Libya and its neighbours and maintaining the momentum of results with Niger under the Partnership Framework;
- **Increasing dialogue and operational cooperation** with partners in North Africa on migration management;
- **Stepping up funding** from the EU Trust Fund for Africa by mobilising €200 million for projects in 2017 to support actions such as training and equipping the Libyan Coast Guard, improving the

conditions for migrants and stepping up assisted voluntary returns.

These efforts require concerted action by the EU institutions and Member States, relevant partners in North Africa, as well as cooperation with international organisations active in the region, such as the UNHCR and the IOM. The Commission and High Representative recommend that the Heads of State or Government meeting in Malta on 3 February endorse the operational actions outlined above.

Background

The European Union and its Member States have progressively laid out a stronger and more articulated policy response to save lives and better manage migratory flows in the Central Mediterranean.

In 2015, the Commission presented a broad European Agenda on Migration. A permanent EU presence at sea has since been established, rescuing hundreds of thousands of people. Following the [Valletta Summit on Migration](#) in November 2015, the EU has stepped up its cooperation with partners in Africa, including through the [Migration Partnership Framework](#), launched in June 2016, which has taken cooperation with key countries of origin and transit to a new level.

An [External Investment Plan for Africa and the Neighbourhood](#) has also been created to support this new approach and has the potential to raise €44 billion in investments - and up to €88 billion if Member States contribute.

The European Union's support to rights-based migration management in Libya includes capacity-building and training of the Libyan Coast Guard, as well in supporting the Libyan authorities (GNA) in providing essential services to the Libyan population, displaced persons, migrants and refugees through ongoing programmes worth over €20 million. The EU further supports Libya through its Common Security and Defence missions such as [EUNAVFOR Med Operation SOPHIA](#) and EUBAM Libya.

For more information:

[Communication: Migration on the Central Mediterranean route. Managing flows, saving lives](#)

[Annex to the Communication](#)

[Questions and Answers: Migration on the Central Mediterranean route](#)

[Factsheet: EU-Libya relations](#)

[Timeline European Agenda on Migration](#)

[Factsheet: Migration Partnership Framework](#)

[EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sofia](#)

[EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya \(EUBAM\)](#)

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