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NOTE

From:	Commission services
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Operationalization of the Pact – Action plans for strengthening comprehensive migration partnerships with priority countries of origin and transit Draft Action Plan: Tunisia

Delegations will find attached a draft action plan for Tunisia prepared by the Commission Services.

The Commission would very much appreciate that the text of the draft action plan be handled with discretion.

Action Plan: Tunisia

Overall EU Objectives – Lines to Take

- The partnership between Tunisia and the EU should be rooted in a mutual interest and aspiration to continue building a prosperous and stable Tunisian democracy.
- Since the 2011 Revolution, the EU has mobilised all its instruments to accompany the country's progress in democracy, good governance, and the rule of law, and ensure socio-economic stability. Almost €3 billion in EU assistance has been provided.
- Despite its achievements, Tunisia faces a challenging period today, which the EU is following closely. The fragmentation of the Parliament after the October 2019 elections and prolonged political instability, culminating in President Saïed's dismissal of the Mechichi government and freezing of Parliament on 25 July 2021, combined with a dramatic health situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have hampered progress on much needed socio-economic reforms. President Saïed subsequently announced a timeline for 2022, including a public consultation running until March, a referendum on constitutional reform scheduled for 25 July, and parliamentary elections for 17 December. This makes 2022 a year of transition for Tunisia.
- The EU will continue to support Tunisia's democratic aspirations, its efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic challenges. Institutional unity is needed to face the dire economic and social consequences of the pandemic and carry out essential reforms. Cooperation with Tunisia is subject to its continued commitment to democracy, human rights, gender equality, and good governance.
- The EU's priorities in its relations with Tunisia are based on the Association Agreement signed by the EU and Tunisia in 1995 and shaped by the Council Conclusions on a renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood and the proposed 2021-2027 EU-Tunisia Strategic Priorities, which are yet to be agreed: i) The promotion of a common space of values, ii) An inclusive, sustainable and connected socio-economic development, iii) Closer ties between the two shores of the Mediterranean and the management of migration and mobility, and iv) Peace and Security.
- Tunisia is a key country on the Central Mediterranean migration route, as a country of migrant origin and transit, but also increasingly as a country of destination. The EU will continue to support and accompany Tunisia in addressing all of its complex mixed migration challenges, from border management and preventing irregular departures to managing an increasing number of migrants and asylum seekers in the country.

Goals for managing migration and addressing forced displacement – Lines to Take

- The EU is committed to deepening its partnership on migration with Tunisia, as reflected in the 2018-2020 EU-Tunisia Strategic Priorities, which are currently being updated, and will continue to underline the importance of migration and mobility in line with the Mobility Partnership established with Tunisia in 2014.

Protection and support to host countries

- The EU aims to support the development of a robust and sustainable legal and operational protection framework for vulnerable third country nationals in Tunisia. The EU will work with Tunisia to adapt and adopt the 2017 draft law on asylum and establish a protection framework prepared with EASO/EUAA's support.
- EASO/EUAA aims to involve Tunisia in its Regional Pilot for North Africa that should foster exchanges and support asylum practitioners from countries in the region.

Root causes of irregular migration

- The EU supports and invests in creating socio-economic opportunities for young Tunisians in regions most affected by migration, drawing on development funds, and looks forward to the adoption of Tunisia's national strategy on migration.

- The EU will continue working with Tunisia on programmes to improve young people's prospects and employability, thus reducing migratory pressure, such as Erasmus+, INNOV'I, ELIF, EU4Youth, and Creative Europe as well as other sectoral programmes.
- The EU also aims to support Tunisian diaspora investments and skills to foster an entrepreneurial ecosystem and capitalise on skills exchanges, while supporting the sustainable reintegration of Tunisian returnees, including through the national Tounesna reintegration mechanism.

Migration governance and management

- Tunisian citizens were the first nationality of irregular arrivals in Italy in 2021 (about 25%). The Central Mediterranean route was in turn the most active irregular route and Italy the first country of irregular entry into the EU.
- The EU seeks a reduction of irregular departures of migrants from Tunisia, both Tunisian citizens and third-country nationals, which have considerably increased throughout 2020 and 2021. The EU will support Tunisian efforts to prevent irregular departures from its coast, conduct rescue operations, as well as build up its reception capacity and facilities. The EU counts on Tunisia to continue these efforts.
- The EU will continue working to enhance Tunisia's border management capabilities and strengthen its search and rescue system in order to save lives. The EU also supports efforts to prevent irregular departures, manage irregular inflows from Libya, and fight the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings. The EU also intends to continue supporting information campaigns on the risks of irregular migration.
- The EU will support Tunisia's efforts in managing an increasing number of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers but also unaccompanied minors with specific protection needs.
- Additional options to extend the cooperation between Tunisia and the EU in the area of search and rescue, and prevention of irregular migration with the aim of preventing deaths at sea should be explored as a matter of priority.
- The EU encourages Tunisia to cooperate with Frontex and to complete working arrangements with Europol and CEPOL. The EU will take any opportunity (conferences, missions, visits) to clarify the role of Frontex and familiarise Tunisian authorities with the agency.

Return, Readmission, Visa facilitation

- The EU wishes to further improve cooperation on returns of Tunisian nationals illegally staying in the EU as a matter of priority, with voluntary returns being the preferred option. With a view to ensuring effective readmission for all Member States, one option – alongside strengthened EU engagement on readmission with Tunisia – is that the EU seeks to relaunch negotiations on a readmission agreement and a visa facilitation agreement.
- The EU stands ready to reinforce practical co-operation with Tunisia on identification and documentation, and on improving conditions of returns and returnees. Tunisia should extend the acceptance of return charter flights from all requesting Member States and accept the return of third-country nationals who transited the country before entering the EU. As part of its efforts to improve migration governance, Tunisia should develop cooperation on readmission with African partners.

Legal Migration and Mobility

- In the spirit of a balanced and comprehensive approach, the EU stands ready to work together with Member States to deepen cooperation on legal migration with Tunisia, identifying sectors of mutual interest with a view to developing a Talent Partnership. Recognition of qualifications and skills, increased job opportunities, measures to avoid brain drain, and seasonal migration will continue to be key elements for consideration along with encouraging diaspora skills and financing.

Measures

- **Political engagement** under the EU-Tunisia Association Agreement (1995) and its institutional bodies, notably the Association Council, the Association Committee and Subcommittee on Migration and Social Affairs at technical level, as well as high-level visits and discussions.
- **Deploying a range of policy tools** in a wide range of areas including trade, agriculture, investment and employment, renewable energy, and initiatives targeting youth through development of socio-economic opportunities, education, and cultural initiatives. Key measures to further cooperation on migration include a potential resumption of negotiations for a readmission agreement and visa facilitation, continuing to build Tunisian capacity for better migration and border management, and developing an offer on legal migration, including a possible Talent Partnership. Increased work with EU agencies such as Europol and CEPOL should also be considered.
- **Funding activities from EU budget under Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020:** The EU supports Tunisia with a total of €93.5 million in migration-related programmes under the North Africa window of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, accompanying the country in line with the priorities of its draft National Strategy on Migration. In particular, the EU support is aimed at enabling diaspora investment in the country, providing social and economic reintegration services to migrants and returnees, supporting young Tunisians prone to migration with socio-economic opportunities, as well as at supporting the country's national governance on migration, the integrated border management system and labour migration governance.
- **Future funding from EU budget under Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027:** The draft **bilateral** Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 (MIP) is under preparation and will focus on: i) a closer relationship between Tunisia and the EU, ii) an open and sustainable economy, and iii) a more inclusive and innovative economy. Migration is for the moment included under the first priority area with a focus on legal migration, mobilisation of the diaspora, protection and reintegration. Addressing root causes of irregular migration will be addressed horizontally by supporting access to quality education and vocational training, the creation of sustainable economic opportunities, decent jobs, stepping up support to SMEs and increasing access to finance, as well as supporting climate change adaptation.
The draft **Multi-Country** Migration Programme for the Southern Neighbourhood will also provide a flexible source of funding to respond to changing needs and routes. The multi-country migration programme will include funding for protection to those in need; support to migration governance and management, including border management; fostering readmission, return and reintegration; and providing legal pathways and will focus on North Africa. Under this programme, Tunisia will benefit from actions under all priority areas, in particular to expand available labour migration schemes, to support better management of migration and further consolidate efforts in the area of reintegration. For 2021 and 2022 the EU intends to dedicate to Tunisia €25 million for border management, €6-10 million for migration governance, and about €5 million for voluntary returns to and from Tunisia. Tunisia will also benefit from multi-country actions worth €20-25 million in the area of legal migration and €12-20 million for the fight against migrant smuggling.
Other EU instruments, notably the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI), and the Internal Security Fund (ISF) may under strict conditions provide complementary funding opportunities for the external dimension of migration.
- **Member States' bilateral engagement (set out in Annex II).**
- Tunisia will be included in the **Team Europe Initiative (TEI)** on the Central Mediterranean migration route proposed by France and Italy. The proposal covers 1) legal migration and mobility; 2) protection and asylum; 3) prevention of irregular migration, fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings; 4) return, readmission and reintegration; as well as 5) addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement. The TEI

will include actions funded and managed through the NDICI-Global Europe and the national resources of participating Member States.

- **Cooperation with EU agencies:** Tunisia is a priority country for CEPOL and Europol. EASO/EUAA is working to establish contacts with the Tunisian administration. Tunisia currently rejects cooperation with Frontex.
- **European Migration Liaison Officer** is posted in the EU Delegation in Tunisia.

Timelines for action

A. Next Steps for engagement by EU and by Member States

- **Subcommittee on Migration and Social Affairs**, first half of 2022 (tbc, depending on Tunisian availability), to discuss current cooperation in the field of migration and related issues and explore perspectives for the future.
- **Association Committee**, first half of 2022 (tbc), for discussion at senior level on current areas of joint work, including migration. The discussions and operational conclusions of the subcommittees are to feed the exchanges in this meeting.
- **Association Council**, (date tbc), high-level meeting chaired by HRVP Borrell where the conclusions of the Association Committee are to be discussed.
- **High level visits:** The Commission, EEAS and Member States should jointly engage in an active dialogue with Tunisia on effective migration management and prevention of deaths at sea. Potential follow-up missions to the visits of Commissioner Johansson together with the Italian Interior Minister Lamorgese (May 2021) and President Charles Michel (April 2021) to Tunisia as well as President Saïed's visit to Brussels (June 2021) and HRVP Borrell's visit to Tunisia on 9-10 September 2021.
- **Signature of Working Arrangements between the Tunisian Ministry of the Interior and CEPOL** (first half of 2022) and **Europol** (under negotiation).
- **Rabat Process:** Ministerial conference in November 2022 (date tbc).
- **Khartoum Process:** Change of the Chairmanship from the Netherlands to South Sudan and Senior Official Meeting in March 2022 (tbc).

B. Next steps for funding measures

The NDICI-GE regulation envisages a flexible source of funding to support comprehensive, balanced and tailor-made partnerships with relevant countries of origin or transit and host countries, and respond to changing needs and routes. The Multi-Country Migration Programme (MCMP) for the Southern Neighbourhood will allow for country specific-actions that complement actions under the national MIP and offer to selected countries an incentive to go beyond what their country MIP offers, in line with a flexible incitative approach. Funds in the draft MIP for the MCMP are programmed only for 2021-2024. The initial planning will be complemented by its built-in flexibility, as the budget period progresses, in order to cater for changing circumstances and migration patterns. Programming of funds for 2025-27 will follow a mid-term review in 2024, taking into account the needs and performance of the partner countries, as well as developments in their relations with the Union and on the ground.

– Actions adopted in 2021 under the new MFF

- Under the Special measure for the **Multi-Country Migration Programme**, the following actions related to Tunisia were adopted:
 - **“EU Support for Border Management Institutions in Libya and Tunisia”** contributes to the improvement of state services through the institutional development of the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres and the Coast Guard Training Academies in Libya and Tunisia. The Tunisia component, for a total of €25 million includes the completion of an integrated coastal surveillance system.
 - **“Supporting sustainable Protection, Return and Reintegration in North Africa”** contributes to the safe return of vulnerable and stranded migrants from North Africa and to the sustainable reintegration of North African returnees into countries of origin. The

amount of the Tunisian component out of the total amount of €60 million will be determined.

- **“Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa (THAMM III)”** aims to expand labour mobility schemes between North African countries and Member States. This €5 million programme may cover also Tunisia, depending on the needs of Member States.
- The Commission plans to continue the Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) in North Africa, following the adoption of the AMIF Thematic Facility Work Programme 2021-22 on 25 November 2021.
- **Actions to be adopted or proposed in 2022**
- Actions related to Tunisia within the **Multi-Country Migration Programme** to be presented to the NDICI committee on:
 - migration management and governance with a specific focus on capitalising on diaspora skills and financing, and protection (€6-10 million indicatively),
 - legal migration and labour mobility (€15-20 million);
 - fighting smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings, with a focus on international police cooperation and cross-border cooperation (two actions, €12-20 million in total).
- **Team Europe Initiative on the Central Mediterranean Migration Route**, next steps: The Commission will share with Member States an overview of indicative financial contributions received and propose a governance structure and a Joint Intervention Logic in February/March 2022.

ANNEX I

Existing EU cooperation and areas of engagement under the New Pact

I. Asylum / international protection

- The EU has supported Tunisia in drafting a national strategy on migration and asylum with funding from the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa under MFF 2014-2020. The EU Trust Fund also provided funding to protect those in need (€9.2 million), with two ongoing regional programmes covering Tunisia. One is implemented by UNHCR and focuses on enhancing self-reliance and access to rights for refugees and asylum seekers in North Africa (€2.9 million), while the other is implemented by NGOs (€2 million). A bilateral programme with a consortium of NGOs has been signed (€4.3 million).
- The role of local actors and in particular municipalities in responding to migration's needs and challenges is also supported by several projects such as City 2 City, ProGreS 4, etc.
- Under MFF 2014-2020, the Commission provided support for the integration of migrants and protection via a Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP), with a total EU contribution for 2015-2020 of €57 million for the whole of North Africa. Implementation was led by the Italian Ministry of Interior. Based on the AMIF Thematic Facility Work Programme 2021-22 adopted on 25 November 2021, the Commission is planning to continue the RDPP in North Africa.
- EASO/EUAA provided support for development of legislation on asylum and the establishment of a national protection framework.
- Going forward, the EU's objective is to ensure that the migration strategy and asylum law are finalised and approved and provide a robust protection framework. EASO/EUAA has invited Tunisia to participate in regional peer-to-peer, technical exchanges on asylum-related matters.

II. Addressing root causes

- Ongoing bilateral cooperation under the MFF 2014-2020 includes a series of programmes, which address the root causes of migration by supporting, among others, the political and socio-economic participation of vulnerable Tunisian youth (EU4YOUth, €60 million), the sustainable and inclusive economic development of Tunisia through the diversification of the touristic offer (Tounes Wihetouna, €45 million) and a better social inclusion to reduce poverty, socio-economic and regional disparities (Programme d'appui à l'inclusion sociale, €100 million).

III. Migration governance and management

- Under MFF 2014-2020, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa supports Tunisia in the implementation of the priorities of its National Strategy on Migration with several programmes (for a total of €18.5 million). This includes the development of a migration statistic database in order to have a reliable and representative data on migration dynamics in Tunisia to inform better programming and policies.
- The Tunisian component of the Border Management Programme (BMP) Maghreb, funded by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (€ 30 million), is implemented by ICMPD (2018-2023), and focuses on strengthening the Tunisian Garde Nationale Maritime (Coast Guard). The main pillars of intervention include: i) establishing an integrated border surveillance and coastal communication system, ii) providing operational equipment to the Coast Guard and iii) capacity building through training sessions.
- The EU's programme in support of Security Sector in Tunisia (€23 million from the EU budget under MFF 2014-2020), includes components beneficial to addressing irregular crossings, human trafficking and smuggling.
- Frontex implemented the EU4BorderSecurity project, which included Tunisia as one of the beneficiary countries. However, no direct border related activities in Tunisia have been carried out due to Tunisian authorities' reluctance to cooperate with Frontex.

Counter-Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings

- The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa finances the initiative 'Dismantling the cross-border criminal networks involved in human trafficking and smuggling of migrants in North Africa', including a Tunisia component (€3.2 million), which is implemented by UNODC. The initiative provides for equipment and training for officers of the Internal Security Forces, as well as the Tunisian Customs.
- The 'Common Operational Partnerships along African migratory routes' programme, which includes supporting capacity building measures in relation to migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, is supported by €7.5 million from the EU budget under MFF 2014-2020, the Tunisian component is implemented by Austria.

Awareness-raising

- Since 2016, 'Infomigrants', a news and information website for migrants to counter misinformation has been supported from the EU budget with €14.6 million. A specific awareness campaign in Tunisia, ARISE, was also supported by €900 000 from the EU budget under MFF 2014-2020.

IV. Returns, readmission, reintegration

- Negotiations on a readmission agreement are stalled since 2019, when Tunisia asked for a pause given that both presidential and legislative elections were taking place in October 2019.
- The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa supports socio-economic reintegration of returnees and has helped set up the Tunisian-led reintegration mechanism Tounesna (€2.5 million of support, with an additional €3.9 million contracted in 2021). The objective is to strengthen the capacities of the Tunisian authorities to carry out reintegration at central and local level and to reinforce coordination among EU Member States encouraging referral to the national reintegration mechanism.

V. Legal migration and mobility and diaspora investment

- Tunisia is one of the beneficiary countries of the regional programme 'Towards a holistic approach to labour migration and mobility' (THAMM), financed by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (2019-2024, €12.5 million for Tunisia), which aims to support labour migration governance in the region as well as to set up or expand mobility schemes of workers to Europe. Pilot programmes have already taken place in Germany and Belgium and France might soon join. The project also includes technical assistance on drafting a National Strategy for International Employment and designing employment policies. The project could be built on as part of efforts to launch a Talent Partnership with Tunisia, as per Member States' interests.
- The EU budget also supports programmes on circular migration targeting Tunisians, such as HOMERe in the case of France (€1 million) and Mentor II in the case of Italy (€3.1 million).
- The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa supports diaspora investment and diaspora skills' transfer for the development of the country, with projects such as Diaspora 4 Development implemented by GiZ (€4 million), with a second phase which should start in 2022, as well as MEET Africa.

ANNEX II

Member States' bilateral engagement

Austria – has a bilateral readmission agreement, but is generally not satisfied by the cooperation with Tunisia, due to issues related to identification, such as delays in response time and the fact that interviews are not performed for persons without documents. Austria has a number of bilateral projects, including: support to UNHCR's humanitarian aid efforts (€2 million in 2020, similar plans for 2021); capacity building in border management (training centre, contribution of €990 000 to a project co-funded by Denmark and Germany and implemented by ICMPD); support to livelihoods and perspectives (through the Harraga project, which aims to create opportunities for young people, deter from irregular migration and help victims of human trafficking; also considering a new project aiming at creating entrepreneurship opportunities to curb migration); information campaigns targeting migrants (supported in the past and considering again).

Belgium – has a bilateral readmission agreement with the country; cooperation is however fluctuating between excellent and (as during the first trimester 2021 when many readmission cases were answered) more challenging periods, due to long response answers to identification requests and the refusal by Tunisia to accept charter flights. In addition to being a stakeholder in the 2014 Mobility partnership, Belgium signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Tunisia in 2018. This MoU contains 2 parts: cooperation in the fields of security, civil protection, crisis management and the fight against radicalism; and legal migration, voluntary return, reintegration but also identification and readmission. The results on the two last points are still below Belgian expectations, with agreed identification procedures that are not respected or delayed by bureaucratic red tape. In terms of legal channels/pathways, Belgium has been supporting pilot projects that facilitate the mobility of Tunisians: (1) a circular migration project piloted by the Belgian Immigration Office and implemented by IOM, relying on the multidimensional cooperation of different stakeholders (e.g. immigration office, public employment services and employers' associations) to successfully provide recent Tunisian graduates with an internship in Belgium and job seeking support upon return to Tunisia; (2) the European THAMM project (Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa).

Czech Republic – The Aid in Place Programme has already financially supported the Regional Development and Protection Programme for North Africa with CZK 10 million (€0.4 million) in 2015 and 2019.

Denmark – is currently running a capacity building project in border management in Tunisia. It provides support for a training facility for integrated border management in Southern Tunisia. The implementing partner is the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). The purpose of the project is to establish a training centre for integrated border management and to develop training materials and curriculums to the training facility. The training centre is being established in Nefta in Southern Tunisia and will focus on operational and practical border training, e.g. patrolling in the southern desert environment and using Tozeur International Airport for training in air border tasks. The Tunisian partners are the National Guard, Border Police and Customs authorities. The project is co-financed by Austria. Project duration: 36 months (2020-2022).

France – Bilateral relations are characterised by a regular and multidimensional dialogue. Beside high-level visits (President, PM, ministers), the High Council on Cooperation takes place every other year under the presidency of the prime ministers, and covers all aspects of cooperation: economy, education and university, health, development aid, culture, governance, security, migration. Cooperation on migration is based since 2008 on a framework agreement on coordinated management of migration and development (AGCFM). This framework, together with bilateral aid in the area of border management and biometrics, has enabled considerable progress in cooperation on returns and readmission. Tunisia was the first partner in the Maghreb region to restart cooperation on returns in 2020 after COVID 19-related restrictive measures were introduced. In parallel, France has worked to facilitate mobility of professionals and met the targets fixed in the bilateral framework. This work includes participation in the EU-funded pilot project on legal migration 'THAMM'.

Germany – has a bilateral readmission agreement and is satisfied with the performance of biometric identification, but is concerned that no other means of identification are used for persons not registered in the Tunisian database. Germany implements a multitude of projects in Tunisia with a direct or indirect link to migration and mobility. These also include actions in development cooperation and supporting stabilisation efforts. In the area of border management, Germany provides equipment (speedboats and lifeboats, vehicles, light masts, etc.) as well as training. Germany supports initiatives on counter-smuggling (to strengthen a coordinated and more structured cooperation between the EU and several Middle East and North African countries, including Tunisia). Germany supports facilitation of knowledge and skill transfer from the Tunisian diaspora, as well as to diaspora entrepreneurs in founding start-ups that contribute to economic development in Tunisia. Returning and potential (irregular) migrants are part of the target group of a variety of projects to create employment opportunities for young Tunisians as a contribution to prevent irregular (re-) migration to Europe. Germany runs and participates in several pilots on regular labour migration of skilled workers and apprentices to Germany, including the EU-funded THAMM. The Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) has concluded a placement agreement with the Tunisian *Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant* (ANETI). The project relies on the so-called "triple-win approach" that is intended to benefit care workers, partner countries and Germany. In this cooperation project, the Central Placement Office (ZAV) of the Federal Employment Agency and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) try to attract skilled health and care workers and jointly place qualified nursing professionals from Tunisia (among other countries) in Germany. The country also provides advice and return counselling (e.g. reintegration scouts provide individual support measures for potential returnees). It provides advice and return / reintegration counseling via the migration advice centers in Tunis and Sfax as well as vocational training, entrepreneurship and employment promotion to support the reintegration of returning migrants (Programme Migration for Development, Returning to New Opportunities).

Greece – there is no bilateral readmission agreement with Tunisia. No interviews are conducted for the identification of Tunisian citizens: the collected data (ID cards, photocopies of passports, fingerprints, etc.) are sent to the Embassy of Tunisia in Athens and then are forwarded to the competent Tunisian authorities.

Italy – engages with Tunisia extensively and regularly; it has a bilateral readmission agreement with Tunisia, and has in place facilitated readmission procedures to return Tunisian nationals illegally landing on the Italian coasts. An Italian immigration liaison officer has been carrying out his tasks at the Italian Embassy in Tunis since 2016. Italy has operational cooperation in the area of maritime surveillance to prevent irregular migration and to enhance search and rescue capacity, based on a structured and quick exchange of information. Italy is involved in the Border Management Programme Maghreb (funded under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa) and is in this context in charge of delivering training courses and providing consultancy in defining technical specifications for procurement. In the area of border management, Italy also runs a programme providing training for Tunisian Police, Customs and Frontier agencies and supplying equipment (vehicles, naval maintenance, radar stations and surface radars, off-road vehicles, boats and engines, for a total value of €138 million since 2011). The Tunisian Government submitted further requests for technical assistance related to border control, which were met in the two-year period (2017-2018) through a dedicated Fund for migration cooperation, for a total of €12 million. These have included the strengthening of the AFIS system (Automated Fingerprint Identification System), reparation and maintenance of six patrol boats of the National Guard, the supply of land transport vehicles, marine engines and radar devices to be assigned to the Police and the National Guard and training courses. In order to promote cooperation in the field of readmission, Italy has a dedicated Fund for specific programs in priority third countries of origin; in this framework Tunisian authorities will benefit from the maintenance of six patrol boats, non-military equipment to enhance border-control and anti-trafficking capacities, as well as reinforcement of socio-economic opportunities for Tunisian youth, in order to tackle root causes of irregular migration. Italy is negotiating a Framework Agreement "on concerted management of migration and joint development". Italy supports a number of projects in economic inclusion, contributing to the fight against the root causes of migration; these include initiatives targeting potential migrants, women and young people looking for jobs, promoting

entrepreneurship and informing on the risks of irregular migration such as TRAIT D'Union (€1.3 million), INDIMEJ (€1.6 million), or CROLET (€1.6 million), that also focuses on capacity building for local authorities in Sidi Bouzil and Kebili. Italy also co-finances and leads the Regional Development and Protection Programme for North Africa (RDPP NA), providing documentation and Refugee Status Determination (RSD), capacity building, training sessions on mixed migration flows and international protection targeting Tunisian authorities. Italy also has a fund for migration cooperation (ca. €10 million) that provides support to the Tunisian authorities' migration management efforts; finances a number of projects implemented by UN organisations on the ground (namely UNHCR, IOM and UNFPA) to sustain Tunisian capacities in reception and assistance of migrants and refugees; and contributes to IOM Assisted Voluntary Return operations from Tunisia. Finally, in terms of legal migration, Italy supports AMEM (Appui à la Migration Equitable pour le Maghreb, financed by AICS and led by ILO), that aims at improving workers' rights and enhancing labour migration management, and Y-MED (financed by Contributo Volontario Italiano and implemented by OIM), that aims at facilitating the training and job-placement of young people through a traineeship and circular migration programs.

Malta – signed a cooperation agreement on Security and Police matters with Tunisia on 6 April 2001 covering various areas of cooperation such as terrorism, transnational and organised crime, and drug trafficking. Moreover, there is an exchange of experience in education and training in police matters. The Armed Forces of Malta are ready to continue providing training through the Maritime Safety and Security Training Centre (MSSTC). The MSSTC is part of the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) establishment and its role is to train AFM personnel working towards promoting and fostering inter-operability in the field of search and rescue and maritime law-enforcement.

The Netherlands – The Netherlands and Tunisia are currently looking for ways to deepen the political dialogue on migration. During ministerial and other high-level visits in recent years, migration has always been on the agenda. Dutch programs in Tunisia include ARISE (IOM), PROTECT II (IOM), Saving Lives and Finding Solutions (UNHCR), OFII, Tounesna PAD, UNDP support to INCLTP (as part of a broader rule of law program), the participation of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in projects CIVIPOL and EUROGENDFOR with the Tunisia National Guard. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee has a liaison officer for migration in Tunisia, who is also accredited for Libya. The Netherlands also addresses root causes through employment programs and enhancement of Rule of Law.

Portugal – Portugal has a broad cooperation agreement with Tunisia, since 2006, covering different areas, including prevention and fight against all forms of migration pressure; it holds regular high-level meetings. Various priorities have been identified in the cooperation with Tunisia, including environment, internal security, professional qualifications, labour mobility and circular migration. Accordingly, there are a number of agreements and MoUs already in force, while others are currently still being negotiated, namely the one concerning internal security and possibly covering other correlated areas. The agreement in the field of internal security also includes management of migratory flows and the fight against irregular migration and trafficking in human beings; border control procedures and systems; security documentation and document fraud; maritime rescue and training. The Portuguese Liaison Officer posted in Algeria had his duties extended to Tunisia in 2016, with the aim of strengthening police cooperation and boosting negotiations for the implementation of a Joint Action Plan, which will follow the entry into force of the internal security agreement. As a result of the meeting held between the Tunisian President and the Portuguese Minister for Home Affairs, in May 2021, the areas of border management and coastal control were identified for possible future cooperation between the two countries.

Slovenia – currently cooperates with Tunisia to provide scholarships in the form of development aid, which provide a legal mobility pathway for students pursuing higher education. Based on the development agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia regularly publishes public calls for scholarships for the study of citizens of different ODA-eligible countries in the Republic of Slovenia. Based on the call for Tunisian citizens published in 2011, applications were received only in 2018.

Since 2019, two Tunisian citizens are receiving scholarships for doctoral studies in environmental science at the University of Nova Gorica, for the period of 2019-2023.

Spain – in 2020 the Spanish Ministry of Interior donated IT equipment to the Tunisian Ministry of Interior to strengthen the capabilities of the security units responsible for border management and the fight against irregular migration. Possibilities to enlarge bilateral migratory cooperation with Tunisia are under consideration.

ANNEX III

Key figures and trends
Irregular migration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Illegal border crossing of Tunisian nationals to the EU: 15 675 in 2021 via the Central Mediterranean route (15 671 to Italy and 4 to Malta), compared to 12 890 in 2020 (12 883 to Italy and 7 to Malta).• Irregular arrivals from Tunisia: In 2021, 20 218 arrivals from Tunisia were registered to Italy (no arrivals to Malta), compared to 14 665 in 2020.• Illegal stay of Tunisian nationals in the EU: 14 065 in 2020 (13 545 in 2019), of which 7 065 in France, 3 790 in Italy and 1 210 in Germany.
Return
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tunisian nationals ordered to leave the EU: 8 005 in 2021 as of end of September. 12 820 in 2020 (11 980 in 2019) of which 6 935 in France, 3 790 in Italy, 535 in Spain.• Return rate: 14% in 2021 as of end of September 2021. 13% in 2020 (22% in 2019).• Highest return rate: In 2021 as of end of September, 100% in Bulgaria, 100% in Romania, and 50% in Greece. In 2020, 67% in Romania, 43% in Germany, 27% in Greece.• Lowest return rate in 2021¹: In 2021 as of end of September, 3.6% in Belgium, 10.7% in Austria, and 12.7% in France. In 2020, 1.9% in Spain, 4.6% in Belgium, 6.2% in France.
Asylum
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First time asylum applications by Tunisian nationals: 6 075 in 2021 as of end of September (4 440 in Italy, 460 in Germany, and 335 in France. 2 690 in 2020 (3 640 in 2019) of which 1 000 in Italy, 415 in Germany, and 270 in France.• First instance asylum decisions: 2 150 in 2021 as of end of September; 2 470 in 2020 (2 910 in 2019).• EU recognition rate excluding humanitarian protection: 9% in 2021 as of end of September; 4.7% in 2020 (3.8% in 2019).• EU recognition rate incl. humanitarian protection: 12% in 2021 as of end of September; 5% in 2020 (4.1% in 2019).
Legal migration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First time residence permits: 23 292 in 2020, of which 15 412 in France, 2 131 in Germany and 2 356 in Italy. 30 831 in 2019 of which 19 652 in France, 3 640 in Germany, 3 530 in Italy.• Total valid residence permits: 386 912 in 2019 of which 235 866 in France, 99 774 in Italy and 29 095 in Germany – No available data for 2020.
Visas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short stay visa applications to the EU: 69 549 in 2020 (247 563 in 2019)².• Share of Multiple Entry Visas (MEVs): 39.3% in 2020 (39.6% in 2019). Top three Member States of MEV issuance in 2020: France (35 122), Germany (4 744), Italy (3 382).• Visa refusal rate: 29% in 2020 (24.3% in 2019).
Asylum/International Protection in Tunisia and hosting forcibly displaced
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• According to UNHCR, as of 30 November 2021, there were 9 255 refugees and asylum seekers in Tunisia. Of these, 3 558 are from Cote d'Ivoire, 2 458 from Syria, 989 of unknown nationality, 497 from Guinea, 490 from Sudan, 475 from Cameroon and 788 of other nationalities³.

¹ No decisions on return were issued in the following countries in EE, IE, LV, LT, MT and SI.

² The substantial decrease in 2020 was due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

³ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/tun>