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WORKING DOCUMENT

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
N° prev. doc.:	6584/2023 INIT
Subject:	Update - Revised Action file - Tunisia

In view of the MOCADDEM RT meeting of 25 October 2023, delegations will find attached the updated MOCADDEM revised action file on Tunisia.

Specific objectives

Continue dialogue and intensified cooperation with Tunisian authorities on overall migration issues, including in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed on 16 July 2023, in order to notably:

- Prevent irregular departures from, as well as irregular arrivals to, Tunisia, strengthen counter-smuggling cooperation and border management, notably through the Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnership, and increase search and rescue efforts;
- Reinforce protection of those in need;
- Increase assisted voluntary returns from Tunisia and sustainable reintegration in sub-Saharan Africa.;
- Strengthen return, readmission and reintegration cooperation between Tunisia and the EU;
- Highlight the importance the EU attaches to legal migration, and develop a successful, mutually beneficial Talent Partnership.

The protection of human rights of all migrants and the full respect of international law are guiding principles for EU engagement.

Joint priorities on migration have been spelled out in the Joint Press Statement following the visit of Commissioner Johansson on 27 April, which identifies three key areas of action:

- 1) Operational Partnership on anti-smuggling;
- 2) Protection and support of voluntary return of irregulars from Tunisia to countries of origin;
- 3) Establishing a Talent Partnership on legal migration.

These priorities have then been further developed under the Memorandum of Understanding, notably under the pillar on migration.

To implement these objectives and agreed actions, enhanced coordination within and between MS and EU services, and between capitals and Tunis, will be needed. A thorough understanding of the migratory situation in Tunisia is useful to guide EU engagement.

In parallel, it is crucial for the EU to step up efforts to address the root causes of irregular migration through programmes in support of youth, access to quality education, creation of sustainable economic opportunities, decent jobs, vocational training and education, step up support to small and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, the EU should support the Tunisian authorities in establishing a legal and institutional framework for the management of migration, reception and asylum.

Measures

Political and technical outreach

Measure 1: Intensify political and senior official level contacts, including through joint missions when possible and appropriate, making full use of the common EU messages on migration (annex) and integrating these messages into a broader set of messages on the political and economic situation.

- **Lead actors:** Commission, EEAS and Member States
- **Timeframe: On going**
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Achieved:

- Visit of Commissioner Johansson on 27 April 2023. 9-10 May 2023: Following FAC tasking, BE and PT Foreign Affairs Ministers visit on behalf of the HRVP.
- Joint mission of President von der Leyen, IT Prime Minister Meloni and NL Prime Minister Rutte on 11 June; followed by another visit for the signature of Memorandum of Understanding on 16 July 2023.
- June 2023: Visit of DE and FR Ministers of the Interior, Nancy Fäser and Gérald Darmanin.
- Video conference between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] on 6 of September 2023.
- Call between Commissioner Johansson and MOFA Nabil Ammar on 11 September 2023
- Call between Commissioner Várhelyi and MOFA Nabil Ammar on 21 September 2023

Planned:

Q3 2023: follow up on Commissioner Johansson's mission at a senior official and/or technical level.

Measure 2: Follow up at technical level of the joint press statement (27 April), the operational conclusions of the EU-Tunisia sub-committee on migration, employment, and social affairs (31 January); continue the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding.

- **Lead actors:** Commission, EEAS
- **Timeframe:**
 - o Ongoing

- Follow up technical meetings on the 5 pillars of the MoU

Prevent irregular departures from, as well as irregular arrivals to, Tunisia, strengthen anti-smuggling and border management cooperation and increase search and rescue efforts

Measure 3: Roll out the Anti-smuggling Operational Partnership (ASOP) and launch of a new regional Anti-Smuggling programme.

- **Lead actors:** Commission, Member States
- **Timeframe:**
 - o Q2 2023: Appoint focal points at the EU side and Tunisian side, explore Tunisian and Member States' availability to launch a Joint Investigation Team under the ASOP
 - o Q4 2023: finalisation of the contract of Anti-Smuggling regional action to increase the investigative and prosecution capacity, number of convictions and criminal networks dismantled, as well as to improve the code of conduct of the police forces

Achieved:

- Europol analyst has been deployed since 19 September 2023 to the Italian Central Operational Service in Rome to assess the existing information on the flows from Tunisia and to identify suitable cross-border investigations.
- A mentorship programme between Tunisian mentees and EU mentors (AT, IT and ES) on migrant smuggling to start **in October** (Euromed Police).
- 2 regional info campaigns are underway since May and June 2023 respectively: one covering Tunisia, Niger, Nigeria targeting the Central Mediterranean Route (consortium of organisations from IT, BE and GR); started on 1 May 2023, and the other covering Tunisia, Morocco (consortium of organisations from IT, FR and ES).

Planned:

- Anti-smuggling regional action in preparation by the COM; adoption foreseen in Q4 2023.

Measure 4: Support the Tunisian Coast Guard and the Tunisian migration and border management system, while ensuring the safeguard of human rights of migrants.

- **Lead actors:** Commission, Member States

- **Timeframe:**

- :
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted] a

Achieved:

- Two ongoing programmes of a total of EUR 35 million (2022) to support for Search and Rescue operations, including to the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre and the training academy of the Garde National Maritime of Tunisia.
- Under the Border Management Programme for the Maghreb region, funded under the EUTF, engines and spare parts have been delivered to make 12 boats operational again. They are awaiting customs clearance by the Tunisian authorities. 2 Tunisian officials have been deployed in Rome as of 9 October.
- Contract for the delivery of fuel (Italy)

Planned:

- Two new contracts for a EUR value of 35 M to be signed to support the navy and GNM capacities for signature in Q4.
- Delivery of a SAR boat in Q4.
- [Redacted]

Measure 5: Intensify and formalise EU agencies' (Frontex, Europol, Cefpol, EUAA, Eurojust) cooperation with Tunisia.

- **Lead actors:** Commission, EU agencies

- **Timeframe:**

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Achieved:

- A 2-day familiarisation visit by a Tunisian delegation to Frontex took place on 13-14 September, to explore also the interest of Tunisia in a working arrangement. The visiting delegation was comprised of personnel from the Ministry of Defence, Navy, Coastguard and Border Police under the overall lead of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Tunisia has been invited to the forthcoming Frontex Search & Rescue exercise (in Greece from 24-25 October); invitation sent on 2 October.

Planned:

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Increase assisted voluntary returns from Tunisia and sustainable reintegration in sub-Saharan Africa and reinforce protection of those in need

Measure 6: Support relevant partners, in particular IOM and UNHCR, in activities and operations for protection of migrants and assisted voluntary return from Tunisia to sub-Saharan Africa.

- **Lead actors:** Commission, EEAS and Member States
- **Timeframe:**
 - June 2023: Adoption of a regional North Africa action document including additional support to assisted voluntary return from the North Africa region (mainly Tunisia and Egypt), and sustainable reintegration.
 - Q4 2023: engage with Tunisian authorities to develop a national mechanism for returns facilitation.

Achieved

- COM signed a new project with UNHCR “Renforcement de la protection et de l'accès aux services de base des réfugiés et demandeurs d'asile vulnérables en Tunisie” [budget: EU EUR 8 million + EUR 1 million from NL] to enhance reception and access to international protection for asylum seekers and refugees.
- COM renewed the regional programme on “Migrant Protection, Return and Reintegration in North Africa” with a top up of EUR 13 million.

Planned

- New technical assistance programme to further support the return system in Tunisia is under preparation by the COM and expected to be signed in Q4 2023.

Strengthen return and reintegration cooperation between Tunisia and the EU

Measure 7: Strengthen EU and Member States' assisted voluntary return and reintegration projects for Tunisian nationals, in particular on the basis of existing good practices, and promote synergies and

coherence of these actions with the Joint Reintegration Services of Frontex, the EU-funded national reintegration support mechanism 'Tounesna' and the TEI of the Central Mediterranean route.

- **Lead actors:** Commission, EEAS, Frontex and Member States
- **Timeframe:**
- Q2-Q3 2023: Ongoing discussions between COM, EUD Tunisia and Frontex on complementarities/synergies between JRS Programme and "Tounesna"

Achieved:

- [Redacted]
- COM further topped-up financing for sustainable reintegration of Tunisian returnees in Tunisia through the national reintegration mechanism "Tounesna"

Measure 8: Pursue all opportunities to improve [Redacted]

- **Lead actors:** Commission
- **Timeframe:** Ongoing

- [Redacted]

Highlight the importance the EU attaches to legal migration

Measure 9: [Redacted]

- **Lead actors:** Member States, Commission

- [Redacted]

Measure 10: Launch of a Talent Partnership.

- **Lead actors:** Commission, Member States
- **Timeframe:**
 - o Q2 2023: Roundtable planned (date TBC) to set the main elements of the partnership and roadmap thereafter

Achieved:

- **Roundtable** held in June 2023 on **Talent Partnership between Tunisia**, COM and Member States (IT, FR, DE). COM is awaiting Tunisian feedback on the conclusions of this meeting.
- 3 projects covering Tunisia already on-going and the fourth being evaluated under Mobility Partnership Facility (MPF) with a budget of EUR 5,7 million.

Planned:

- Joint Roadmap for Talent Partnership to be finalised in Q4 2023
- Renewed regional programme on legal migration (THAMM +, EUR 18 million) in preparation by the COM, to be signed in Q4 2023 includes Tunisia

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ANNEX: Common messages

General messages (to be complemented by the MaMa Working Party)

- Recall the long-standing, close and comprehensive partnership between the EU and Tunisia and express the EU's will to continue and deepen this mutually beneficial cooperation, based on mutual commitments, shared priorities, democratic values, and the respect for human rights. The EU-Tunisia partnership encompasses the full range of shared interests – political, economic, and sectoral in addition to migration – and must be deepened across the board to be effective.
- Recall the EU's intention to work closely with Tunisia through the prism of the implementation of the five pillars of the Memorandum of Understanding on a strategic partnership concluded on July 16, 2023, and the Ten-Point Plan for Lampedusa presented by the European Commission on September 17, 2023.

Complementing messages on migration

- Express strong concerns over recent numbers of irregular departures from Tunisia observed in September 2023, resulting in several serious incidents of shipwrecks and severe loss of life at sea.

[REDACTED]

- Emphasize the importance of the protection of human rights of all migrants, including access to an asylum procedure, basic services and infrastructure, as well as of preventing and addressing all forms of violence against migrants.

- Thank the Tunisian authorities for the efforts to prevent the loss of human lives and underline the need to strengthen these efforts, while respecting human rights of rescued migrants.

- [REDACTED]. Stress the importance of accurate data on migration.

- Stress the EU's willingness to strengthen support to Tunisia in the field of border management, search and rescue, and through capacity building in the field of migration and reception, based on an updated assessment of the needs of the Tunisian authorities and on ensuring the protection of migrants' human rights. Encourage active participation of relevant Tunisian actors in the SAR project.

- Highlight that the fight against the networks of migrant smugglers and human traffickers will be further supported through the Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnership, launched on 27 April 2023 and through enhanced cooperation with EU agencies. On border management, developing cooperation between Tunisia and Frontex would be an important step forward. Stepping up operational cooperation with EU MS law enforcement authorities, would also be a significant step forward.

- Underline EU's willingness to continue to address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement in Tunisia and countries of origin of those migrating to/through Tunisia, focusing particularly on youth by supporting education, vocational training, entrepreneurship, and job creation.

- Underline the potential of the Talent Partnership, bringing together several Member States' engagement in the field of legal migration and creating a platform for exchanges on labour market needs and concrete follow-up actions, including the facilitation and scaling-up of mobilities, in line with the mutual interests of Tunisia and the EU. Look forward to the conclusion of Joint Roadmap later this year.

- Highlight the regional TEI (Team Europe Initiative) for the Central Mediterranean migration route, which should enable us to strengthen, in an integrated and coordinated manner, the support of the EU and the Member States to Tunisia, taking into account all the migration matters that arise along the route, in dialogue and cooperation with Tunisia and other participating states.

- Stress the need for Tunisian authorities to facilitate assisted voluntary returns from Tunisia to countries of origin, sustainable reintegration and protection of those in need, in full respect of the human rights of all migrants and reiterate the EU's commitment to step up support. Welcome the removal of fees for departures..

- Recall that the EU remains committed to effective cooperation with Tunisia on readmission with all Member States. Underline the EU and its Member States' readiness to work on returns (both voluntary and non-voluntary) and reintegration of Tunisian nationals, including in the framework of the EU supported national Tounesna mechanism, as well as the Frontex JRS and other EU and Member States reintegration projects.

- [REDACTED]

- Stress that the EU is following with concern the developments in Sudan, and its already visible impact on the migratory situation in the region, including Tunisia.