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with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration

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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL**

**Second Progress Report: First Deliverables on the Partnership Framework with third
countries under the European Agenda on Migration**

1. Introduction

Since the October Report¹, engagement with the five priority countries and other countries has continued at an intense pace on the basis of the October European Council conclusions. These conclusions highlighted two areas where results were expected by the December European Council: progress in cooperation with the five selected priority countries, and first results in terms of reducing irregular arrivals and increasing returns. It also underlined the importance of action at national level to speed up processes on returns, and agreed to look at a possible extension of the list of priority countries.

This Second Progress Report presents the actions taken in the framework of the Partnership and the progress made since October. Twenty high level visits by Member State ministers, the High Representative and Commissioners have taken place, backed up by meetings at technical level to maximise operational results.

Even in the short time since the October European Council, there has been concrete progress delivered in most of the priority countries. Important building blocks for new cooperation on returns were agreed, and stalled return processes were re-started. EUR 1 billion has been mobilised under the EU Trust Fund for Africa² to support the objectives foreseen in the framework of Valletta. EUR 726.7 million will be added to the EU budget in 2017 to further support the development of the external dimension of migration. The basis for operationalising a one-stop-shop for data collection on returns at EU level and reinforcing administrative cooperation on returns have been laid down.

In terms of operational results the flows of migrants crossing the Sahara via Niger has recorded its lowest point, down to 1,500 in November from 70,000 in May. In Niger, 95 vehicles were seized, 102 smugglers sent to justice. Of the migrants intercepted in irregular transit 4,430 have been repatriated with the assistance of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). In addition, in 2016 around 2,700 migrants from the five priority countries have returned from the EU to the respective countries of origin.

However, this reduced transit flow within Africa has not yet resulted in reduced arrivals to Europe. Arrivals from the five priority countries via the Central Mediterranean route in 2016 have increased to almost 59,000, out of a total of over 173,000 arrivals via this route, pointing at the need to continue and broaden the implementation of the Partnership Framework.

The full potential of the Partnership Framework has not yet been entirely exploited. First, the linkage made with other policies – such as legal migration, trade, energy, agriculture and education – remains limited. This can make the foundation for genuine partnerships with third countries, and gearing up these policies to work in the Partnership Framework context will be a key objective in the coming months. Second, the support of Member States - including in the internal dimension of migration policies - has proved crucial for success. This has to continue and be stepped up as the process deepens and broadens. Third, the Valletta process, which remains the foundation of our approach to migration in Africa, will be reinvigorated through the Senior Officials Meeting next February.

The intense engagement with third countries under the Partnership Framework needs time and commitment to produce its full results. Rollout of projects addressing the root causes of irregular migration, new procedures for identification and effective returns, and targeted actions to break smuggling on key points in the routes leading to Europe lay the foundations for delivering visible results in the next months.

¹ COM(2016) 700 final of 18.10.2016.

² The Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa.

2. Progress with priority countries and first deliverables on arrivals and returns

2.1 Priority partnership countries - progress delivered

Niger

Niger is of critical importance as a country of transit from sub-Saharan Africa to the Mediterranean. It is also a country facing huge challenges in terms of its governance and its development needs. It faces its own refugee problems as spillover from the Lake Chad and Mali crises. In spite of this, Niger has maintained a strong engagement with the EU in particular to counter migrant smuggling and to reduce the flow of irregular migrants becoming a showcase of how the EU and its Member States can combine the various instruments and tools available in a comprehensive manner.

Momentum has been maintained through a series of EU high level visits; the German Chancellor visited the country in October, followed by the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs at the beginning of November and the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs in December. The visit of the President of Niger to Brussels on 15 December will close a year of very intensive exchanges and will allow agreeing on the next steps.

On the basis of this engagement, the key action on the ground has been focused on the Agadez region. On the one hand, this involves cracking down on migrant smugglers and trafficking in human beings. But a lasting solution must also involve helping migrants to return to their homes and providing alternative economic opportunities for local people. Care must also be taken to avoid the diversion of migration to other routes.

Action has been taken on all these strands. The number of persons leaving Niger to attempt the dangerous crossing of the Sahara has fallen from over 70,000 in May to around 1,500 in November.³ In addition, the number of migrants being directed towards the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) for repatriation has been increasing from an average of 350 per month before the summer to 1,100 in November. 4,430 of them have already benefited from assisted voluntary returns to their countries. The trend has also continued in respect of the seizure of equipment and the arrest of smugglers. Between mid-July and end of October, 95 vehicles were seized, 102 smugglers sent to justice, and 9 gendarmes were arrested for migration-linked corruption.

Direct EU support has been critical to make all this happen. This includes hands-on support on the ground to support the design and implementation of the short term actions to tackle smuggling and trafficking in human beings. The European Union CSDP⁴ Sahel Niger mission field office in Agadez is operational, and since April, it has run a series of trainings, including 20 training sessions on migration, intelligence and arrest techniques for 360 members of the internal security forces. The office will be further reinforced by two additional staff from the Commission and the EEAS, and a liaison officer will be deployed by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency.

EU funds are also being deployed to continue and further expand the results. The EU Trust Fund for Africa will support in six centres 30,000 vulnerable migrants intercepted along the migration route, and the return of 12,000 migrants to their communities of origin. In addition, support from Member State economic programmes will be provided aiming at supporting self-employment to 1,400 Nigeriens in transit zones and improve skills of 6,000 young people to facilitate their insertion in the labour market. To have an immediate impact the

³ Niger Flow Monitoring Points, IOM Statistical Report Overview, November 2016.

⁴ CSDP: Common Security and Defence Policy.

Commission has also developed a short term impact project⁵ under the EU Trust Fund for Africa that directly responds to the request of Niger for visible and rapid creation of alternative income to replace the “smuggling industry”. For the longer term, the EU and Member States are working to tackle the root causes and to provide sustainable alternatives for the local economy with a package of budget support.

Given the serious protection challenges that Niger faces to host displaced populations, support to Niger is also provided through regional action, which supports access to status determination procedures, reception conditions and assistance to asylum seekers in Niger.

Finally, it is also important to be able to measure results. The EU is working with the IOM to reinforce data collection, working in 40 strategic locations along the migration routes to look at migration flows and routes, migrant demographics and the drivers of migration.

Next steps

- ***Continue the implementation of actions to fight smuggling and trafficking, building on results achieved.***
- ***Elaborate a medium and long term Action Plan focused on root causes and creation of economic alternatives in the regions most affected by irregular migration.***
- ***Monitor possible diversion of migration to other routes.***
- ***Deployment of European Border and Coast Guard Agency liaison officer.***
- ***Full deployment of EU staff and the EUCAP antenna in Agadez, including for training.***

Nigeria

Nigeria is a key partner in the region and has developed relations with the EU across a wide variety of policy areas. There are therefore a series of ongoing contacts at high level, with visits from the German Minister of Foreign Affairs to Nigeria and the Nigeria Minister of Interior to Italy in October. These work-strands will be drawn together in the EU-Nigeria Ministerial meeting in spring next year.

Nigeria continues to be an important country of origin of irregular migration to the EU with 35,998 arrivals through the Central Mediterranean route in 2016. Over 200,000 of its citizens are regularly residing in Europe and an average of 30,000 - 40,000 new residence permits are delivered every year.

Migration is already a core aspect of Nigeria's relationship with the EU. Practical cooperation on readmission functions better with Nigeria than with the other priority countries and is improving. In total, almost 2,000⁶ Nigerian nationals irregularly staying in the EU had been returned by mid-November in 2016. The effective return rate to Nigeria shows improvements in 2016 but remains at a relatively low level, signalling constraints within Member States. Nigerian authorities have delivered 65% of the Emergency Travel Documents requested by Member States. Cooperation with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency continues to be positive; an identification mission to determine the nationality of return candidates took place in November to three European countries. Two additional missions to Member States to help identifying Nigerian nationals are planned to take place before the end of the year.

⁵ This "Plan d'Action à impact économique rapide à Agadez" has been submitted for adoption to the Operational Committee of the EU Trust Fund for Africa.

⁶ Return data are based on the 27 Member States' and 2 Schengen associated countries' responses to a dedicated questionnaire.

Liaison officers from Nigeria posted in Member States are supporting identification upon arrival on the Central Mediterranean route.

To build on this positive cooperation in the field of return and readmission and establish a EU-level playing field the negotiations on an EU-Nigeria Readmission Agreement started in October. The next round of talks is due to take place in Brussels early in 2017 with a view to their swift conclusion.

Practical cooperation is also being stepped up. Cooperation in the field of smuggling will be further reinforced through an EU-Nigeria cooperation platform on migrant smuggling, launched in October.

Protection challenges in Nigeria are being addressed by mobilising different kinds of support. For instance, protection concerns are mainstreamed in the EU humanitarian response and specific support notably related to child protection is provided

Nigeria at the moment remains a relatively small beneficiary of the EU Trust Fund for Africa with five approved projects. In the context of the Boko Haram crisis the EU Trust Fund for Africa response provides a comprehensive approach in the field of stability and resilience. Projects focus on the North East and have approximately 280,000 direct beneficiaries (Internally Displaced Persons, returnees, and host communities). The assistance provides access to basic services and improved socio-economic and livelihood opportunities as well as community strengthening, including conflict management and prevention. Three more projects are in the pipeline to address return and reintegration of irregular migrants and anti-radicalisation. The European Commission will develop further projects, in particular in support to activities in the field of the reintegration of returning migrants, and migration management. In the framework of the European Development Fund (EDF)⁷, a number of migration related EDF projects are being contracted.

Next Steps

- ***Further develop projects and initiatives addressing trafficking and smuggling including with the support of Europol and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency.***
- ***Conclude negotiations on EU-Nigeria Readmission Agreement and foster good practices in the field of return, also by addressing internal constraints.***
- ***Develop initiatives to address root causes of migration and stimulate investments.***

Senegal

Since October, dialogue with Senegal has further intensified against a backdrop of 9,548 nationals arriving through the Central Mediterranean route so far in 2016. The Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development visited the country, followed by a visit of Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Finally, the EU High Representative/Vice President participated in the Third International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa in December in Dakar, providing another opportunity for bilateral engagement. There is also a stepping up of technical contacts; negotiation between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the Senegalese authorities on the conclusion of a working arrangement, is advancing. Official contact points in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior are now established.

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/funding-instruments-programming/funding-instruments/european-development-fund_en.

Since the beginning of the year until mid-November, only 435 Senegalese irregularly staying in the EU have returned to Senegal. Senegal has recently offered to step up assistance to address arrivals on the Central Mediterranean route. Cooperation on identification and documentation needs to improve as it is still lengthy and complicated, and planned missions have not yet taken place. Further work will be needed to closely monitor and sustain this new momentum to ensure operational results. The cooperation on returns needs to be considered in the context of the significant legal pathways in place, with more than 230,000 Senegalese legally residing in the EU in 2015 and an average of 15,000-20,000 new residence permits delivered each year by EU Member States to Senegalese nationals⁸.

At the same time, EU funds are also helping to address the root causes of irregular migration, with projects supporting job creation for youth adopted under the EU Trust Fund for Africa, which support 600 local businesses and farms with tailor-made technical assistance, create up to 24,000 direct and indirect jobs, and give 12,000 young people access to professional training in sectors such as agroindustry, forestry, tourism and fisheries. Senegal also benefits from a regional project supporting law enforcement entities. New projects, currently under development, would extend the scope of activities by including better migration management and facilitating the reintegration of 3,000 Senegalese and the sensitisation of 200 communities and 30,000 potential migrants, as well as supporting consolidation of civil registry systems, in addition to creating economic and employment opportunities in regions with a high migration potential. In addition, an EDF project on internal security and border management to improve capacities of internal security services in the fight against terrorism, organised crime, border management and fight against irregular migration was adopted in October 2016.

Next steps

- ***Continue fostering practical cooperation in the field of return and readmission, including through dedicated missions to Member States.***
- ***Step up cooperation in the field of fight against smuggling and to address root causes including by swiftly implementing the projects adopted under the EU Trust Fund for Africa.***

Mali

Mali is a significant country of both origin and transit for migrants and one facing considerable political and development challenges. In 2016 9,305 persons arrived irregularly to Europe from Mali on the Central Mediterranean route, an increase on 2015. Over 100,000 citizens of Mali are regularly residing in Europe and an average of 6,000-8,000 new residence permits are delivered every year.

Dialogue and cooperation, including at high level, has again been intensified, with a visit of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and Italy. Mali is currently chairing the Steering Committee of the Rabat Process, and therefore will play an important role in the preparations of the Valletta Senior Officials Meeting in February 2017. This strengthened cooperation has been enshrined in the form of a Joint Declaration that was issued in the occasion of the visit of the Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs to Mali on behalf of the HRVP on 10-11 December.

The situation in terms of protection remains a particular concern, with approximately 135,000 Malian refugees in neighbouring West African countries. The European Commission has been providing basic humanitarian support to Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and

⁸ Data from EUROSTAT.

Niger. The EU Trust Fund for Africa will support the resilience and self-sufficiency of these refugee populations, contribute with the UNHCR to maintain peaceful coexistence between displaced populations and communities and facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees.

The return rate of migrants from Mali continues to be significantly low. In total, since the beginning of the year, 119 Malians have returned to their country of origin. Practices on cooperation in the field of readmission, including release of Emergency Travel Documents, vary significantly depending on the consulate, with several Member States reporting difficulties and delays. To address these challenges, Mali has worked with the EU in view of the return of persons irregularly staying in the Union on the basis of standard procedures finalised between the two parties respecting their mutual obligations. Missions have been carried out to this end.

Mali is also an important transit route for migrants from Western African countries directed towards the Mediterranean. As a result of the anti-smuggling activities carried out by Niger Mali risks to be increasingly used as alternative transit country. This is facilitated also by the highly volatile security situation in the central and northern part of the territory. Mali has expressed a strong commitment to curb illicit smuggling activity and clamp down on criminal networks. This area of cooperation will be pursued at full speed in the coming months in order to address the transit dimension of migration in Mali while fully respecting the ECOWAS framework.⁹

Mali remains one of the most important recipients of funds under the EU Trust Fund for Africa to date. In addition to projects that have already been approved under the EU Trust Fund for Africa since January 2016, three more projects are expected to be approved soon, including on biometric population registry, reintegration for returnees, awareness raising campaigns on the risks of irregular migration, and youth employment for 8,000 young people in rural and urban environments. These projects will provide assistance to 16,000 stranded migrants, facilitate the return of 4,000 migrants in transit to the neighbouring countries and support the sustainable reintegration of 4,000 Malians in their communities of origin.

Next steps

- ***Maintain close dialogue with Mali as Chair of the Rabat Process, in the preparations of the Valletta Senior Officials Meeting in February 2017.***
- ***Monitor and address the situation in terms of protection and displacement.***
- ***Step up work with Mali on the transit dimension as a matter of priority.***
- ***Strengthen cooperation in terms of effective returns***

IOM project for West Africa and Libya

As part of the Partnership Framework approach the EU, together with Germany and, Italy, has developed an innovative regional initiative with the International Organisation for Migration in 14 countries. The new initiative for migrant protection and reintegration in Africa is worth EUR 100 million and will:

1. support the voluntary return and the reintegration of 24,000 migrants from transit countries in Africa as well as the reintegration of returnees from Europe to their home communities.
2. establish migration response and resource centres along migration routes in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, with the aim of supporting 58,000 vulnerable migrants in need.

⁹ The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on 'Free Movement of Persons, residence and establishment' states that "the Community citizens have the right to enter, reside and establish in the territory of [ECOWAS] Member States".

3. inform 200,000 migrants stranded on the routes and 2000 communities' potential migrants on the risks related to irregular migration, alternatives such as legal and safe migration, rights and obligations and opportunities for voluntary return and reintegration.

4. systematic data collection in strategic locations along the migration routes will be established. The data collected will focus on migrant demographics, migration flows, and routes, and gather more detailed information on the drivers of migration.

To enhance the sustainability and coordination of the actions, capacity building of the national authorities and key stakeholders will be included in all actions whether focusing on protection, return and reintegration, information and awareness raising campaigns, as well as data collection and analysis.

Ethiopia

Arrivals of Ethiopian nationals on the Central Mediterranean route reached 3,363 in 2016, while over 30,000 Ethiopians are regularly residing in Europe and an average of 4,000-5,000 new residence permits are delivered every year.

The country presents a particular challenge in terms of difficult political circumstances. Continuous engagement of the EU with the Ethiopian Government will be crucial to support the necessary political reforms aimed to tackle the grievances which are at the basis of the unrest since November 2015. The internal stability of Ethiopia and the wider region is at stake – EU action should contribute to avoid a massive crisis in the region and the inevitable consequences it would have.

Since October progress on return and readmission, has remained very slow also in light of the political situation. Overall since the beginning of the year 172 Ethiopians irregularly staying in EU countries have returned to Ethiopia. Despite the difficulties technical dialogue has continued, and some encouraging signs are being recorded in this context. A workshop on readmission is being prepared for early 2017. Ethiopia will also take over the chairmanship of the Khartoum process on 15 December 2016.

Cooperation on readmission is part of a broader effort the EU is pursuing in the area of migration. After Uganda, Ethiopia is the African country that hosts the highest number of refugees (783,000). EU development and protection support to refugees in Ethiopia has continued through the implementation of the Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) for the Horn of Africa, targeting support for over 100,000 refugees out of the estimated 415,000 Somali and Eritrean refugees currently in Ethiopia, as well as the host communities, and with including specific action for the protection of children. Ethiopia is one of the main beneficiaries of the EU Trust Fund for Africa – for example, a Trust Fund project is seeking to build the resilience of a million farmers in vulnerable areas prone to violent conflict. Further programmes are in the pipeline to support job creation, in particular for refugees, as well as to support the establishment of a unified national identification and registration system. The EU has announced its readiness to provide financial support to the newly planned industrial parks, which are intended to create jobs not just for Ethiopians but where also approximately 30,000 jobs will be reserved for refugees.

Next steps

- ***Maintain close dialogue with Ethiopia as Chair of the Khartoum Process, in the preparations of the Valletta Senior Officials Meeting in February 2017.***
- ***Continue building on the initial steps taken in order to improve cooperation in the field of return and readmission.***

- ***Strengthen further support to Ethiopia as a country of transit and of destination of migrants and refugees.***

2.2 Development of cooperation on migration management with other countries

As this Progress Report shows, progress in the Partnership Framework approach with the five priority countries remains uneven and will require continuous engagement. The particular financial and political commitment required to advance with the priority countries suggests that this should not be diluted.

At the same time, strengthened migration cooperation in the spirit of the Partnership Framework continues to be fostered also outside the priority countries. This will also prepare the ground for a possible extension of the priorities in the near future.

Jordan, Lebanon

The EU-Lebanon Partnership Priorities and the annexed "Compact" (defining reciprocal commitments in facing the impacts of the refugee crisis) were adopted on 11 November 2016. The EU-Jordan Partnership Priorities for Jordan, also with a Compact, have been agreed upon and should be formally adopted before the end of the year at the upcoming Association Council. The Compact priority actions will be funded through the additional EU funds pledged for Lebanon and Jordan at the London Conference, including at least EUR 1 billion to be allocated in 2016 and 2017. As of 1 November 2016, the EU had already committed EUR 666 million for Lebanon and Jordan through its different instruments, including the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis and Humanitarian aid.

On this basis the EU will start the negotiation on the EU-Jordan Readmission and Visa Facilitation Agreements and advance the negotiations on the EU-Lebanon Mobility Partnership.

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran

On ***Afghanistan***, the implementation of the EU-Afghanistan Joint Way Forward on migration issues continued, with the first meeting of the Joint Working Group on 30 November.

As for ***Pakistan***, migration - with a special emphasis on the implementation of the EU-Pakistan readmission agreement - was discussed during the EU-Pakistan Joint Commission on 24 November. These efforts already yielded results in the field of return. In addition, the Commission intensified efforts on the establishment of an electronic platform aimed at reducing difficulties in readmission processing.

Closer engagement on migration related issues will be taken forward with ***Iran***, a country of origin, transit and of destination and host to large numbers of refugees, with which a comprehensive dialogue on migration is planned to be launched in the first half of 2017.

As part of the Partnership Framework the EU intends to step up cooperation in the coming months and promote a ***regional approach*** to support the protection and sustainable reintegration of Afghan nationals displaced in their region of origin in cooperation with the UNCHR.

On ***Bangladesh***, the EU has increased its political engagement to follow up on the agreed development of standard operating procedures on returns, deployment of identification missions, information campaign and reintegration projects. The latter projects will soon be ready to launch if progress can be seen in the migration dialogue which started in April 2016.

Cooperation with Bangladesh will be further enhanced in the coming months in view of preparing the ground for enhanced support under the Partnership Framework.

Egypt

Although departures of irregular migrants from Egypt this year are estimated to have risen by 15% (around 13,000 migrants have reached Italy from Egypt), overall numbers remain comparatively low and have been decreasing since October. The situation continues to be closely monitored and dialogue has been stepped up with the visits of the Commissioner for the European Neighbourhood Policy in October, and the Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship in November. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency paid a scoping visit to Egypt in October.

Support to the UNHCR actions to safeguard international protection needs in Egypt is being undertaken under the RDPP North Africa. Migration and mobility will also be part of the future EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities which will frame EU's bilateral support for the three coming years under the revised European Neighbourhood Policy. The EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis and the EU Trust Fund for Africa provide additional tools for financial assistance for capacity building, protection of vulnerable groups, socio-economic support to migration-prone groups, and strengthening common actions against smuggling and trafficking.

The partnership priorities with Egypt will include a relevant dimension on Migration. Upon their confirmation the EU will immediately step up cooperation with Egypt in this field through dedicated senior official visits and with the support of relevant EU Agencies and Member States.

Libya

Libya continues to be the main departure point for the Central Mediterranean route, and a hub towards which converge migratory routes originating both from the Western Africa and the Horn of Africa. EU action on migration in Libya is limited all the time there is no functioning national government with unified control of all law enforcement and military bodies is in place.

In addition to the existing cooperation between the Mediterranean Member States and the Libyan Coast Guard through the Seahorse Mediterranean Network, a number of projects have been launched since June 2016, including the training of the Libyan Coast Guard by Operation EUNAVFOR MED Sophia, and preparations for the establishment of the Libyan Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre with the support of the Italian Coast Guard.¹⁰ Member States are invited to make the necessary contributions so that full operational capacity for Operation Sophia is maintained.

The EU-Libya Committee on Integrated Land Border Management was set up in August as a forum for exchanges on border management. The trilateral meeting with the Foreign Ministers of Libya, Niger and Chad on border management under EU support has been followed up by a meeting between the EU Delegations to these countries, and a further meeting is planned in early 2017.

¹⁰ The objective is to enable the Libyan Coast Guard to carry out border surveillance and search and rescue operations as well as other coast guard functions (e.g. fisheries control, prevention of oil smuggling) along the Libyan coasts.

In the coming months the EU intends to step up its already significant efforts in cooperation with International partners, in particular IOM, with a view to address the humanitarian situation of migrants stranded in Libya.

The core objective of such cooperation will be to offer an alternative return opportunity for migrants who are held in dire conditions. Implementation of projects worth EUR 20 million is ongoing, aimed at facilitating the voluntary return of stranded migrants, supporting host communities by providing employment opportunities for local communities and migrants, providing assistance to vulnerable migrants, and aim at improving their living conditions in detention centres. The intention is to further intensify these efforts alongside the training of the Coast Guard that is being provided. In addition to efforts mapping the main issues at stake on migration in the country, and a pilot initiative aiming at community stabilisation in areas affected by internal displacement and transit of migrants, a EUR 20 million action is being taken forward to help migrants at disembarkation points and in detention centres, as well as to scale up humanitarian repatriation (with an initial target of 5,000 migrants) and reintegration.

West Africa

Irregular migration from *Côte d'Ivoire* to Europe has been regularly increasing from 2,000 in 2014 to 5,000 people in 2015 and 10,000 people between January and September 2016¹¹. *Guinea* has been in the top five countries of origin of migrants for several months and it ranks second position in terms of number of migrants in Agadez. *Ghana* is a country of origin and transit, both legal and irregular; in 2015, there were around 125,000 Ghanaian legal residents in the EU and in the same year, 5,600 Ghanaians were found to be irregularly present in the EU.

These three important countries of origin and transit of irregular migration in Sub-Saharan Africa are not covered by the EU Trust Fund for Africa¹². In order to initiate a dialogue and agreeing objectives and targets relating to migration, the EU will propose to enlarge the geographical scope of the EU Trust Fund for Africa.

Further support will also continue to be provided to *Mauritania*, a significant transit country that is already cooperating with the EU to manage migration.

The recent elections in *The Gambia* open new possibilities for an enhanced bilateral relationship with a country of origin from which in 2016 over 11,000 persons have arrived irregularly to the EU via the Central Mediterranean route.

Horn of Africa

Cooperation on migration between the EU and the region has built up since November 2015, in line with the Valletta Summit.

A specific framework for addressing all aspects of migration management, including fostering cooperation in fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human being across and among all the countries of the region, notably from Ethiopia to Egypt via Sudan, is provided by the Khartoum process. A meeting of the Senior Officials of the Process is scheduled on 16 December in Addis Ababa and will prepare next steps for cooperation.

¹¹ Data from the European Border and Coast Guard Agency; on 1 December Italy registered more than 12,000 people from Côte d'Ivoire in 2016.

¹² Currently 23 countries are covered by the EU Trust Fund for Africa: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

The EU has specifically engaged to protect and support refugees in the region. In addition to humanitarian assistance, the Regional Development and Protection Programme for the Horn of Africa has led to five projects to support the protection and sustainable livelihoods of refugees and host communities in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda, as well as intensified action in Uganda following the recent influx of forced displacement after the conflict in South Sudan. Kenya has announced the closure of the Dadaab refugee camp, currently hosting 350.000 Somali refugees. Should it implement this decision, this is likely to have serious negative implications throughout the region.

Next steps

- *Finalise the formal adoption of the Compact for Jordan and start negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements.*
- *Finalise the negotiation of the Mobility Partnership with Lebanon.*
- *Strengthen the regional work concerning displaced Afghans in order to facilitate their sustainable reintegration in cooperation with UNHCR.*
- *Enhance the work with Egypt on the basis of the partnership priorities being finalised.*
- *Strengthen further the work in Libya to address the situation of stranded migrants in the country.*
- *Extend the geographical coverage of the EU Trust Fund for Africa to Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Guinea.*
- *Continue and expand cooperation under the Khartoum process.*

3. Key tools and instruments for further implementation of the Partnership Framework

3.1 Reinforcing Member States' work on returns

The Partnership Framework laid the ground for increased cooperation between EU Member States and partner countries on return and readmission. In particular, the organisation of identification missions from partner countries to Member States can solve cases where returns are not completed. However, there have been instances where identification missions already agreed with partner countries were not carried out and where the reason was that Member States were unable to take the appropriate internal steps within the necessary timeframe.

Part of the reason for the low level of returns lies in the EU itself. Only a fraction of migrants irregularly entering the EU from the five priority countries currently receive a return order. While this is partially explained by the possible asylum requests, it is clear that there are significant gaps that need to be addressed. In line with EU law, return decisions should be issued to all irregular migrants who do not have the right to stay on the EU territory.

Securing effective return requires that Member States have in place the appropriate administrative and implementation systems – and devote the adequate resources to manage return processes and ensure that those who need to return do not abscond. To this end they should make full use of the applicable EU rules. Many actions are ongoing with the aim of improving the effectiveness of return policy inside the EU. These should be swiftly implemented and Member States' processes need to be reinforced.

The implementation of the Partnership Framework also revealed a weakness in the collection and the sharing of data by Member States as regards returns. A targeted questionnaire was circulated to Member States in view of the preparation of this Report. While almost all Member States have responded, the data collected still present a fragmented and incomplete

picture of the situation across the EU. In order to address this shortcoming, the Commission accelerated the creation of an operational return database within the Integrated Returns Management Application (IRMA) launched earlier in 2016 and is providing training in Member States on its use. Member States input to feed the IRMA database will be necessary in the coming months to monitor progress in the implementation of the Partnership and sustain the delivery of results.

3.2 Operational tools

European Migration Liaison Officers

Thanks to the joint efforts of the Member States and the EU institutions, European Migration Liaison Officers (EMLOs) have been selected for all the countries identified as priorities under the Partnership Framework. A comprehensive pre-deployment training programme has been set up for all the EMLOs (including the ones for the five priority countries) to be followed by their deployment in early 2017. It is important that the Member States liaison officers, and the EMLO fully cooperate, exchanging all relevant information, and act jointly.

Cooperation with Agencies

Discussions have been launched on how to make full use of the expertise of the relevant EU Agencies in third countries. The enlarged mandate of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and Europol gives new opportunities to work with third countries. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency is in discussions with the authorities of several countries to conclude working arrangements: Libya, Morocco, Senegal, Mauritania, Egypt and Tunisia. It is also deploying a liaison officer in Niger. Also Europol, the European Asylum Support Office and Eurojust should step up their role on the external dimension, in particular in the priority countries.

3.3 Policy tools

The Communication on the Partnership Framework in June¹³ called for all EU policies to contribute to its implementation. So far financial assistance has been the main instrument supporting the implementation of the Partnership. If the Partnership is to stay credible and deliver on its strategic goals, other EU policies, including trade, visa policy, neighbourhood policy, energy, climate, environment, maritime and fisheries, agriculture, digital policy, and education, will have to offer other sources of leverage and support. This will be a central priority in the coming months, with a particular focus on trade policy.

Trade in particular contributes to tackling the root causes of irregular migration by creating economic opportunities in partner countries via free trade agreements or unilateral preferences. Links and synergies between trade policy and migration are being further explored.

Education mobility provides an important route to offer new opportunities to foster mobility under the Partnership Framework. Erasmus+ is already offering Jordan, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal a total of 1,165 mobility actions¹⁴ have been financed with these countries in 2016. 77 scholarships were funded for Erasmus Mundus joint Masters¹⁵ with a high demand from Ethiopia and Nigeria in particular and seven fellowships for joint

¹³ COM(2016) 385 final of 07.06.2016.

¹⁴ Jordan – 517, Lebanon – 405, Ethiopia - 118, Mali - 64, Niger - 2, Nigeria - 5, Senegal – 54.

¹⁵ Ethiopia - 50, Jordan - 6, Lebanon – 5, Nigeria- 14 and Senegal – 2.

Erasmus Mundus doctorates were funded. Eleven Erasmus+ capacity building projects involve the priority countries.

Universities' demand for staff and student mobility is significantly higher than the budget available in the Sub-Saharan region. The EU is ready to step up this work and to finance up to an additional 5,000 Erasmus+ credit mobility and 110 Erasmus Mundus mobilities for joint Masters¹⁶, as part of the work on the Partnership Framework and in line with the partners' needs and absorption capacity.

In addition, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action offers funding opportunities for the exchange of research staff and there has been an excellent response to the first call in 2016 of the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility scheme. 53 applications were received, out of which 7 projects can be funded (representing 543 mobility flows). In parallel to the exchanges, scholarships and research funding, the Tuning Africa and Harmonisation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation initiatives are facilitating the mutual recognition of academic qualifications both within Africa and with the EU.

A total of approximately 50,000 new residence permits are delivered every year to nationals of the five priority countries. In line with the existing rules, legal arrivals could be organised in a more efficient manner. While the volume of third countries' nationals admitted on their territory for the purpose of *legal migration* is decided by each Member State at national level, this would not prevent the possibility for interested Member States to join forces to facilitate the development of cooperation on legal migration with selected third countries. This approach, if tested, could contribute to enhance the impact of the Partnership Framework and contribute to reduce the use of irregular channels of migration.

Finally on resettlement, apart from the Council conclusions of 20 July 2015 to resettle 22,504 persons in need of protection, which includes the possibility for Member States to resettle from priority countries, especially Ethiopia and Niger, further efforts to provide legal avenues for those in need of protection are being explored, for example through the recent proposal for a Union Resettlement Framework, which is currently discussed among the co-legislators

Next steps

- ***Strengthen internal administrative processes in the field of return and enhance data collection in order to gather a better operational picture.***
- ***Finalise deployment of EMLOs.***
- ***Strengthen the contribution of the work of EU Agencies.***
- ***Assess the need to increase resettlement from relevant priority countries.***
- ***Mobilise all policies and tools to broaden the work on the Partnership Framework with a focus on trade and legal migration.***
- ***Offer up to 5,000 Erasmus + mobilities and 110 Erasmus Mundus joint Master mobilities, as part of the work on the Partnership Framework.***

¹⁶ Erasmus+ credit mobility is short term mobility between 3 and 12 months (traditional Erasmus mobility) allowing students to obtain credits in European universities, which are then recognised in the student's home institution. This action can also fund staff mobility in both directions for learning, or training. Erasmus Mundus joint Masters: high-level and highly competitive scholarships for excellent students interested in doing a joint Erasmus Mundus Master in at least two different European countries.

3.4 Financing instruments and tools

A wide range of *EU financing instruments* continued to support the implementation of the Partnership Framework, in particular the European Development Fund (EDF)¹⁷, the Development Cooperation Instrument¹⁸, the European Neighbourhood Instrument¹⁹, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund²⁰, and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace²¹.

The EU Trust Fund for Africa

The EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing the root causes of irregular migration encompasses a total of 23 countries, its current resources amount to EUR 2.4 billion from the EDF and several EU budget financing instruments, and it includes an additional EUR 500 million from the EDF reserve. So far, EU Member States have pledged EUR 82 million. Since November 2015, 64 programmes across the three regions have been approved for a total of EUR 1 billion. Programmes contracted so far amount to EUR 471 million, while three programmes worth EUR 27.5 million will be contracted before the end of the year. Future actions to be funded under the Trust Fund have been prepared taking into account ongoing political dialogues, with a pipeline for December comprising 42 new projects for a total approximate amount of EUR 589 million.

Since its establishment, the Trust Fund for Africa has achieved a balanced approach in allocating resources throughout its strategic priorities and, also thanks to its flexible and swift character, has generated a positive trend in support of the implementation of the Partnership Framework. It has significantly contributed to embed migration in political dialogues between Africa and the EU by creating further incentives for cooperation on key interest areas.

The strategic use of this instrument will be crucial to achieve further progress in the Partnership Framework. To this end the Strategic Board of the EU Trust Fund for Africa meets on 13 December 2016.

Other financial developments

Given the limited geographical scope of the EU Trust Fund for Africa, efforts have been made to increase the impact of other instruments. In particular, the European Parliament and the Council have recently agreed to authorise some additional EUR 726.7 million in the 2017 budget to further support the development of the external dimension of migration.

4. The European External Investment Plan

In order to deliver a long term reduction in the push factors that drive migration we need to transform the economic outlook for our partner countries, especially in Africa. To implement an agenda of such scope and scale, we need to multiply the resources. The public sector will

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/funding-instruments-programming/funding-instruments/european-development-fund_en. The European Development Fund is established within the framework of an international agreement between the EU and its partner countries. This EU-ACP Partnership Agreement – also known as the ‘Cotonou Agreement’ – was concluded in 2000 and is revised every five years.

¹⁸ Regulation (EU) No 233/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation for the period 2014-2020, OJ L 77/44 15.03.2014.

¹⁹ Regulation (EU) No 232/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument, OJ L 77/27 15.03.2014.

²⁰ Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014, OJ 150/168, 20.5.2014.

²¹ Regulation (EU) No 230/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing an instrument contributing to stability and peace, OJ L 77/1, 15.03.2014.

play its full part but now more than ever we will need the private sector to invest in long-term, sustainable development. This is not just about development co-operation or migration management: it is about building, and tapping into, the fast-growing markets of the future that can also deliver real returns through jobs and growth back in the EU.

In September the Commission put forward proposals for a new External Investment Plan. By using the catalytic potential of over EUR 4 billion of European funding, mostly development funding, the EU can inject at least EUR 44 billion, or up to EUR 88 billion of additional investment, if Member States and other partners match our contribution.

The European Council Conclusions of 21 October reaffirmed the importance of the External Investment Plan²² (EIP) to the implementation of the Partnership Framework. A new European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) lies at the core of the Plan; its purpose is to support - through the supply of financing capacity in the form of grants, guarantees and other financial instruments to eligible counterparts - investment and increased access to financing in African and Neighbourhood partner countries. It would provide a major boost to development through innovative harnessing of private sector support.

The Council of Ministers has now agreed its position. In terms of progress at the European Parliament, the Commission has been supporting the work of the European Parliament Committees on Budgets and Development. The parliamentary process and the trilogues between the Parliament, Council and the Commission should start early next year, with the aim of having the Regulation adopted in the first half of 2017.

The External Investment Plan also includes concrete measures to help promote investments in these countries and support for wider improvements in the business environment. Foreign investors – including many EU companies – see the enormous potential of these markets and can help to upgrade their economies in a mutually beneficial way. The German and Italian presidencies of the G20 and the G7 also highlight the need for a stable investment environment as a basis for sustainable economic progress in Africa, an issue which will also be on the agenda of the EU-Africa summit in autumn 2017.

In addition the Commission will step up its focus on 'Economic diplomacy' and integrate this with Partnership Frameworks where appropriate.

5. Conclusions

The Partnership Framework is proving an effective tool to enhance the work on the external dimension of migration, although progress achieved so far amongst the priority countries varies.

In Niger and Mali the process is reaching cruising speed and is having an impact on the ground. This work needs to be maintained and possible diversions of the migration routes need to be closely monitored. In the other priority countries the channels of cooperation are being reinforced but will continue to require sustained effort in order to build on the existing momentum and deliver concrete results.

²² The proposal to set up an ambitious External Investment Plan was included in the Communication on establishing a new Partnership Framework of June 2016 and then set out and announced by President Juncker in his State of the Union speech of 14 September 2016 (and in an accompanying Communication, COM(2016) 581). The proposed Plan includes a proposal for a European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD).

It is also essential to keep up the pace and the depth of engagement, to make clear to partners that this is a process which will need a comprehensive and sustained commitment from all if it is to succeed for the long term. The commitment of Member States at home is equally key for delivery. As recalled by the European Council, it is essential that political engagement by national Ministers remains steady. It is also important that national administrative processes for returns are stepped up and that the data is collected to allow progress to be measured.

Financial resources and other opportunities will need to be used in a strategic manner in order to foster better migration management and tackle root causes in countries of origin and transit, including by finalising swiftly the negotiations on the External Investment Plan. The range of policies harnessed to the Partnership Framework approach, will need to be increased along the lines set forth in this report in order to tailor the approach to each of the priority countries. This links to the need to use the synergies between the Valletta Summit process and the Partnership Framework to the full, to maximise the joint potential of the two tracks.

In the short term the focus will remain on the five priority countries to continue delivering results and ensure a sustainable process. Based on lessons learned, and taking into account the available financial resources and the need to avoid an overstretching of EU and Member States actions thereby making them less effective, the possible extension of the current approach to other countries and regions will be considered.

In parallel, migration cooperation will be stepped up with a selected set of countries – including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Ghana with which work is already ongoing. The EU Trust Fund for Africa will be extended to Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Ghana. Enhanced work also on Libya will be pursued along the lines described in this report. Progress achieved in these countries will continue to be the subject of further reports.

The Partnership Framework is now up and running. It has succeeded in bringing a new depth to relations with the priority countries on migration, based on mutual trust and strengthened engagement as a joint endeavour of the EU and Member States. Now this positive trend needs to deliver a sustainable improvement in the management of migration as a common challenge.