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From: Secretary-General of the European Commission,
signed by Mr Jordi AYET PUIGARNAU, Director

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To: Mr Uwe CORSEPIUS, Secretary-General of the Council of the European
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Communication on the Work of the Task Force Mediterranean

Delegations will find attached document SWD(2014) 173 final - Part 1/2.

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PART 1/2

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Implementation of the Communication on the Work of the Task Force Mediterranean

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of the Task Force Mediterranean was triggered by tragic events taking place off the coast of Lampedusa on 3 October 2013 when 366 migrants lost their lives. On the basis of a mandate of the Justice and Home Affairs Council and of the European Council in October 2013, the European Commission chaired the Task Force Mediterranean which gathered all EU Member States, the EEAS relevant EU Agencies (EASO, Frontex, FRA, EMSA and EUROPOL) as well as associated states in order to identify short- and medium-term operational actions to be implemented. In its work, the Task Force incorporated the recommendations emerging from the European Parliament Resolution on 23 of October 2014 and consulted relevant external stakeholders including International Organisations.

On 19-20 December 2013, the European Council discussed the report of the Presidency on the work of the Task Force Mediterranean. In its conclusions, the European Council welcomed the Communication of the European Commission on the work of the Task Force Mediterranean¹ which outlined thirty-seven operational actions and called for the mobilisation of all efforts in order to implement them. In its Conclusions, the European Council confirmed its intention to return to the issue in June 2014 as part of a broader longer-term policy perspective, when strategic guidelines for further legislative and operational planning in the area of freedom, security and justice will be defined.

Since the adoption of the Communication, all players have been implementing operational initiatives linked to the Task Force recommendations. The European Commission has gathered information, including through written contribution by Member States, associated countries, the EEAS, and EU agencies about these actions.

This Staff Working Document aims at providing a comprehensive picture in view of the discussion in the Justice and Home Affairs Council in June and the subsequent European Council, as well as for discussion in the European Parliament. The Staff Working Document focuses on the main actions while the annex gives a more detailed presentation of the different activities. The document should help establishing a coordination framework for further actions.

The European Commission reported on the follow up to the work of the Task Force Mediterranean to the LIBE Committee of the European Parliament on 27 January 2014 and on 1 April 2014, as well as to the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 3-4 March 2014.

¹ COM(2013) 869 final

MAIN ACTIONS

1. Actions in cooperation with third countries

- **Mobility Partnerships with Morocco and Tunisia** have been established and are being implemented. These include a balanced set of commitments and initiatives covering the four priority areas of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, i.e. legal migration, irregular migration, international protection and migration and development. Furthermore, the Mobility Partnerships will pave the way for negotiations of visa facilitation agreements and readmission agreements. Discussions on a **Mobility Partnership with Jordan** have begun and are at an advanced stage.
- **A readmission agreement was signed with Turkey in December 2013** which will now need to be ratified and implemented. The Turkish authorities' capacities to prevent irregular migration and to manage mixed migratory flows should be strengthened in the context of the visa liberalisation dialogue, which has been launched in parallel to the signing of the readmission agreement. Furthermore, cooperation with border Member States, in particular Bulgaria and Greece, has been stepped up. The EU is also supporting the newly established General Directorate for Migration Management in Turkey.
- Despite the operational difficulties in Libya, the **EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM)** has been supported through the deployment of National Experts while the , "SaharaMed", has re-started its capacity building activities in the field of border management improving management of voluntary return and rehabilitating retention centres. Also the START project is contributing to address labour market needs in sectors critical to the country's recovery, with an initial focus on the health sector
- Together with the incoming Italian Presidency, the European Commission has started the preparations for the possible establishment of a **regional dialogue process** within the framework of the EU-Africa dialogue with countries along the **East African migratory route**. Such regional cooperation should address the issue of prevention and combatting migrant smuggling and trafficking of human beings from the Horn of Africa as well as the mixed migration reality in the region.
- The political commitment to address root causes of irregular and forced migration flows by enhancing cooperation with the countries of origin and transit, especially Southern Mediterranean countries, has been matched by **financial and operational support**. **Several projects** are being implemented to strengthen the migratory systems, enhance human rights of migrants and contribute to the economic development of the countries concerned in the Southern Mediterranean and Sub-Sahara Africa as reported in the annex.
- The **Seahorse Mediterranean network**, to establish a secure maritime communication network to combat irregular migration, has been launched and involves EU Mediterranean countries and Libya. The European Commission, the EEAS and Member States are working towards involving other Northern African partners.

- Two Pilot Projects for **Information campaigns** are starting on the Eastern and the Western African Routes. One is going to be implemented in Niger led by IOM and one in Ethiopia led by UNHCR. The projects include a strong innovation component in their dissemination methods (eg. social media and mobile phones) and the involvement of diaspora groups.
- As discussed by the Justice and Home Affairs Council an initiative **on a pilot basis to improve the effective return rate of irregular migrants to a number of specific countries of origin** should be pursued. The aim of this initiative should be to mobilise all adequate means, using in a coordinated manner all the incentives and leverages available at the EU and Member States' level, to stimulate the selected pilot countries to comply with the international obligations to readmit their own nationals.
- A **European Migration Network Return and Integration experts' group** was established to facilitate the exchange of information and operational cooperation among stakeholders on issues related to return and reintegration of third country nationals in their countries or origin.
- **Training courses and capacity building activities** in the field of migration management and international protection have been prepared in cooperation with UNHCR and IOM, in Congo, Burundi, Niger, and in the Sahel. Some of these initiatives are contributing by deploying officers, supplying vehicles and technical equipment (Gambia, Niger and Nigeria); others by providing financial support (in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Ghana). EuroMed Migration III reinforced its horizontal component on Migration Profile Processes, which aim at supporting Mediterranean Partner Countries in setting up inter-institutional coordination mechanisms in order to manage migratory flows more effectively.
- The **EU-Africa Summit on 2-3 April** 2014 adopted a separate declaration on migration and mobility. The declaration acknowledged the benefits that migration and mobility can bring to both continents and that a comprehensive approach to migration and mobility are powerful vehicles for boosting sustainable economic, social and environmental development. It called on promoting the role of migrants as agents of innovation and development and for a comprehensive approach to tackle the serious social and human impact of irregular migration. The Summit reiterated the Heads of State and Government's shared commitment to, amongst others, fight irregular migration and to address all its relevant aspects, including prevention, strengthened migration and border management, smuggling of migrants, return and readmission, as well as addressing the root causes of irregular migration and enhance cooperation to address trafficking in human beings.

2. Regional Protection Programmes, Resettlement and reinforced legal ways to access Europe

- A **Regional Development and Protection Programme** has been set up in the region **neighbouring Syria** with a goal of improving the protection situation of refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, through direct assistance, strengthening of national systems, and sustaining the livelihoods capacities of refugees and vulnerable host population.
- The **EASO** has started a project aiming to promote the participation of Jordan in the work of EASO and the participation of Tunisia and Morocco in the work of EASO and Frontex.
- The financing for the **Regional Protection Programme for North Africa** has been extended until the end of 2014, with the objective of building a broader initiative starting in 2015.
- The global commitment of the European Union for **resettlement and humanitarian admissions** reached 15.000 refugees in 2014, up from 4.930 in 2012. However, while the total quota has increased, the number of Member States participating remained limited².
- The co-legislators also agreed on the **Seasonal Workers Directive** and on the **Intra-Corporate Transferees (ICT) Directive**, while important steps forward have been made for the Students and Researchers Directive.

3. Fight against trafficking, smuggling and organised crime

- Due to the high impact that stronger networks of smugglers have in the intensification of migration flows in the Mediterranean area, a comprehensive plan on smuggling is being developed.
- Within the frame of the EU policy cycle for organised and serious international crime, an Operational Action Plan 2014 related to the EU crime priority "Illegal Immigration" has been adopted in December 2013. The Plan contains concrete actions to tackle smugglers networks, including a information-sharing pilot project between on networks facilitating illegal immigration, which involves 11 Member States as well as Europol and Frontex, or the creation of a Joint Operational Team to tackle Organised Crime Groups in main transit or last embarkation countries organising ship facilitations towards the EU, with the participation of Europol, Frontex and nine Member States.
- Two **European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) Action plans** on irregular migration and trafficking have been adopted in December 2013 focusing – inter alia - on the establishment of Liaison Officers on irregular migration in Turkey and initiatives to fight visa abuse and marriages of convenience.

² Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom

- The European Commission initiated a **comprehensive review of the existing legislation on smuggling** while the FRA published a **comparative paper** on the criminalisation of migrants in an irregular situation and of persons engaging with them.

4. Reinforced border surveillance contributing to enhancing the maritime situational picture and to the protection and saving of lives of migrants in the Mediterranean

- Frontex **Joint Operations Aeneas and Hermes (IT), Poseidon Sea (EL), Minerva and Indalo (ES)** engaged several Member States through the deployment of experts and equipment.
- In parallel, Italy started one of the most significant sea border patrolling and search and rescue programmes in the Mediterranean – **Mare Nostrum** – which contributed to saving thousands of lives since October 2013. Further engagement of Frontex in the Mediterranean is now under consideration on the basis of the discussions that took place in the Task Force.
- **The co-legislators have agreed on the rules** for the surveillance of the external sea borders in the context of operational cooperation coordinated by Frontex
- **EUROSUR** is already operational in the Member States around the Mediterranean Sea, through the creation of National Coordination Centres, via which different national authorities with a responsibility for border surveillance, such as border guards, coast guards, police authorities and increasingly also the navies exchange information and cooperate on a daily basis..
- **Frontex and EMSA improved inter-agency cooperation** for delivery of integrated maritime services in the framework of EUROSUR. In particular, they are working together with the EU Satellite Centre on new systems (satellite imagery) on early detection of irregular migrants and vessels. This cooperation includes the provision of the EMSA live maritime traffic picture and also facilitates the integration of EMSA services such as early warning mechanisms (behavioural algorithms) for the detection of vessels of interest, as input into the EUROSUR application.
- The possibilities offered by **the European Patrols Network**, have been exploited by some Member States in cooperation with Frontex, aiming at coordinating naval patrols between administrations in specific areas.

5. Assistance and solidarity with Member States dealing with high migration pressure

- The European Commission delivered **emergency funding** of **EUR 50M** to Italy, Bulgaria, Malta, Germany, France, Hungary, Cyprus and the Netherlands. In particular, **EUR 30M** have been earmarked by the Commission **for Italy** to face the particularly high influxes on its southern coasts and relieve the pressure on Lampedusa. Given the increased number of arrivals, some Member States have already expressed the need for emergency funding in 2014 and their requests will be considered by the European Commission.

LIST OF ACTIONS – TASK FORCE MEDITERRANEAN

- EASO is carrying out **support programmes for Greece, Italy and Bulgaria**. Several Member States have committed experts and other qualified personnel to be deployed in Asylum Support Teams.
- The European Commission is starting to use **Article 33 of the recast Dublin Regulation** with the aim of strategically framing solidarity measures available at the EU level for the benefit of Member States under pressure.
- A new **comprehensive activity of contingency planning** has started. This incorporates new data collection by EASO and the adoption of the revised statistical guidelines in EUROSTAT.
- A new **pilot project for the supported processing** of asylum applications has started in the framework of EASO with a first meeting organized on 19-20 March 2014 in view of starting the pilot activities by the summer.

CONCLUSIONS

In line with the mandate of the Task Force Mediterranean several short term operational actions have been undertaken in order to prevent deaths at sea and reinforce sea border surveillance. These activities are often part of broader processes launched by relevant players which have been refocused in order to achieve these objectives.

However, the situation in the Mediterranean Sea has not ceased to be very critical, and the impact of the pressure it generates reverberates in the whole of the EU. Several initiatives, including search and rescue activities, proved to be relevant tools to avoid new tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea, but at the same time the number of arrivals increased dramatically. Since the beginning of 2014, there has been a 10-fold increase of arrivals in the southern coasts of the European Union compared to the same period last year. In Italy about 35.000 migrants have already arrived (in 2013 the total number of arrivals was 40.000), but situations of pressure are also manifest in Spain and Greece.

The recommendations emerging from the work of the Task Force Mediterranean have a very strong operational value which is extremely relevant in order to address the ongoing situation of crisis in the Mediterranean; therefore its content is still very actual and needs to be implemented as a matter of priority and urgency also by identifying the key operational priorities for the summer months. In particular the contribution of the EU agencies involved and the immediate launch of the pilot initiatives envisaged in the Communication should be pursued without delay.

From the outlook provided by this Staff Working Document it is also evident that concerted and coordinated actions at the European level, also with a view to increase efficiency and avoid duplications is necessary.

Although operational in nature, the comprehensive approach designed in the context of the Task Force Mediterranean can also be an important contribution for the upcoming debate on the future strategic priorities in the field of Home Affairs which will be discussed by the European Council in June 2014 when the guidelines in the area of freedom, security and justice will be defined.