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From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 26 February 2018
To: Delegations

Subject: Council Conclusions on Special Report No. 9/2017 by the European Court of Auditors: "EU support to fight human trafficking in South/South-East Asia"

Delegations will find in the Annex the Council Conclusions on Special Report No. 9/2017 by the European Court of Auditors: "EU support to fight human trafficking in South/South-East Asia", adopted by the Council at its 3598th meeting held on 26 February 2018.

**Council Conclusions on Special Report No. 9/2017 by the European Court of Auditors:
"EU Support to Fight Human Trafficking in South/South-East Asia"**

1. The Council welcomes the Special Report No. 09/2017 by the European Court of Auditors entitled: "EU support to fight human trafficking in South/South-East Asia"¹.
2. The Council notes the conclusions of the Special Report that the EU had been effective in supporting the fight against human trafficking in South/South-East Asia and that the EU's human trafficking policy framework largely provides for a comprehensive approach to address human trafficking, although some aspects are not yet fully developed; Furthermore, as the Court also indicates, that human rights dialogues were a particularly useful tool in support of the fight against human trafficking. The Council also notes that the projects examined by the Court in South/South-East Asia have produced some positive results in the fight against human trafficking, even though their impact might have been greater if a comprehensive approach had been adopted, allowing increased interaction and synergies between projects and other human trafficking-relevant tools.
3. The Council acknowledges and takes good note of the recommendations of the Court in particular regarding the need to develop further the strategic framework of the EU against trafficking in human beings, to improve the guidance on the external dimension, and to ensure that projects are designed in a way that maximises their impact. The Council reaffirms its willingness to engage further and advance its work on an effective EU policy addressing trafficking in human beings, including prevention and reduction of the demand, as well as assistance and support for the victims of human trafficking.
4. The Council takes note of and welcomes the Commission and EEAS replies which accompany the Special Report as well as the acceptance on their part of the Courts' recommendations.

¹ https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR17_9/SR_HUMAN_TRAFFICKING_EN.pdf

5. The Council recognises that the path to dedicated partnerships against human trafficking and enhanced project sustainability in South/South-East Asia relies on increasingly constructive dialogues with the countries, and regional formats such as ASEAN and ASEM, on broader issues such as respect for human rights and cooperation assistance, within which issues related to trafficking in human beings are currently being discussed. It is a process which requires time, resources and strong cooperation with the counterparts in the region. The launch in 2015 of EU-ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue is one example of such joint commitment.
6. The Council invites the Commission and the EEAS to implement the recommendations of the Special Report and welcomes the actions already undertaken or under way. In particular, the Council welcomes the adoption by the Commission of the Communication entitled "Reporting on the follow-up to the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of trafficking in human beings and identifying further concrete actions"² as a basis for developing further practical measures in external relations and assistance areas towards implementing the full scope of the recommendations made in the Special Report.
7. The Council encourages the EU and its Member States to step up and better coordinate support to the efforts to address effectively the trafficking in human beings in South and South-East Asia.

² COM(2017) 728 final