

**ASSOCIATION  
BETWEEN  
THE EUROPEAN UNION  
AND EGYPT**

**The Association Council**

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The EU-Egypt **Association Council** held its eighth session in Brussels on 20 December 2018.

This eighth session was co-chaired by Ms Federica MOGHERINI, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and H.E. Sameh SHOUKRY, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

The European Commission was represented by Commissioner Johannes HAHN.

### **Opening remarks**

The High Representative Federica MOGHERINI welcomed Minister SHOUKRY to the plenary session of the 8th Association Council as a very good opportunity to take stock of EU-Egypt relations and of the implementation of the Partnership Priorities in a frank and constructive discussion.

Commissioner HAHN warmly welcomed Minister SHOUKRY to the Association Council, saying it was a good occasion to move forward on issues of common interest for the EU-Egypt partnership, including fostering cooperation with a view to promoting socio-economic development and inclusive growth in Egypt aiming at the stabilisation and long-term prosperity of the country and the whole region.

The Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sameh SHOUKRY, said he was delighted to attend the 8th meeting of the Egypt-EU Association Council, which reflected the growing impetus in relations and the political will to extend areas of cooperation. The 2017-2020 Partnership Priorities had enhanced the traditional partnership by embracing topics such as sustainable economic modernisation, social development, social justice, energy, security, environmental and climate issues, in tandem with the foreign policy partnership, particularly in the fields of combating terrorism, illegal migration, organised crime, human trafficking, as well as cooperation in multilateral fora aiming at a secure and stable Mediterranean region.

The Minister briefed the participants on Egypt's current situation and on the comprehensive socio-economic reform programme drawn up in cooperation with the IMF to address the structural imbalances the Egyptian economy had faced for decades, in combination with a stringent social safety net to mitigate any negative impact on the most vulnerable segments of the population. While the political and economic turbulence at regional and global level made this reform programme

more difficult to implement, the steadfast support provided by Egypt's partners remained an important asset in maintaining the government's strategic goals. In the area of trade, Egypt was willing to expand relations and attract more European direct investments to accompany in a co-partnership the opportunities arising from the national megaprojects, including the Suez canal economic zone and the ongoing construction plans for twelve new smart cities across the country. Egypt is recognised as a beacon of modernisation in a region plagued by extremism and rising populist trends, a country where moderation and tolerance provide opportunities for stability. Anchored in Egypt's foreign policy and diplomacy was a strong belief in intensifying efforts towards the promotion of political solutions to the regional crises in Libya, Syria and Yemen, and in preserving the territorial integrity of all states in the region, as well as reaching a final settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the two-state solution.

The High Representative gave the floor to Member States' representatives attending the session.

Mr Andreas PAPASTAVROU, Permanent Representative of Greece, welcomed the Egyptian Minister and acknowledged the Association Council meeting as a further step towards a constructive and fruitful relationship between the EU and Egypt, two stakeholders sharing common strategic long-term goals in fields such as migration, combating terrorism, energy and security, among others. Egypt is a strategic partner in the Southern Mediterranean region, with which cooperation at all levels has to be developed. Egypt's efforts to avert irregular migration flows towards Member States were noted, as well as its key role to stability and security in the wider region, in addition to its support in fostering Europe's relationship with the Arab world, for instance by hosting the EU-LAS Summit in Sharm-el-Sheikh in 2019 or by holding the presidency of the African Union. In the field of foreign policy, bilateral cooperation with Egypt is crucial in many respects, especially in addressing the regional challenges in Syria, Libya, the Middle East and Africa. Regarding the Nile Basin, the EU should support a consensus-based approach to all initiatives aiming at the promotion of cooperation among the riparian states. The Ambassador also emphasised the trilateral cooperation between Greece, Cyprus and Egypt in supporting peace, stability, prosperity and security in the south-eastern Mediterranean area, as illustrated by the 6th trilateral summit held in Elounda, Crete, on 10 October 2018.

Mr Pablo GARCIA-BERDOY, Permanent Representative of Spain, warmly welcomed the Egyptian delegation and confirmed Egypt's key role in the region. He recognised the shared challenges faced by Egypt and the EU in making relations between the two actors a priority. He expressed hopes for

a balanced and constructive dialogue based on confidence and trust between the parties both on points of common interest, but also on issues where different perspectives were prevailing. Apart from Egypt's role in fighting terrorism, he underlined the country's strong commitment, to all areas featured in the Partnership Priorities, which represent the roadmap for bilateral cooperation. He commended the ambitious and bold economic reforms undertaken by Egypt in key areas for its future, like the energy sector, where major progress had been achieved within the framework of the MoU opening up new opportunities and allowing Egypt to become an energy hub and satisfy its internal demand. He also referred to gender and human rights issues, which were national priorities for Spain and the EU. Efforts made by Egypt in tackling migration challenges were underlined, in addition to the cooperation between Europe and Egypt in contributing to regional stability and prosperity. The active role played by Egypt in bringing the League of Arab States closer to the EU was another positive aspect of cooperation.

Mr Philippe LÉGLISE-COSTA, Permanent Representative of France, welcomed the 8th session of the Association Council, stressing that it was strengthening the relationship between the EU and Egypt following the agreement on Partnership Priorities, and recalled that France and Egypt had developed their bilateral strategic partnership in parallel, as underpinned by President Emanuel Macron's visit to Egypt. He referred to the common challenges ahead: combating terrorism, security, economic and social reform and even demographics calling for additional EU support to Egypt. France welcomed Egypt's role as mediator in the Middle East region as well as Egypt's efforts to meet its IMF commitments. The partnership between Egypt and the EU should allow for political, technical and financial support to programmes and priority areas for Egypt's social and economic development and for a close political discussion on areas of mutual concern, such as resolving regional crises and combating terrorism. He underlined Egypt's engagement on the Libyan file, particularly concerning initiatives to unify the army under civil powers, and the pursuit of dialogue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He recalled France's attachment to discussions with Egypt on civil society, including NGOs and active media, which represent the diversity of society itself. The EU-LAS Summit organised by Egypt in 2019 in Sharm el-Sheikh would provide an opportunity to reinforce the relationship between the EU and the League of Arab States.

Mr Luca FRANCHETTI PARDO, PSC Ambassador of Italy, affirmed the strategic interests shared by the EU and Egypt, as confirmed by the resumption of regular Association Council meetings and the adoption of the Partnership Priorities. The preservation of stability, security and sustainable development in Egypt is considered crucial for the region and for the whole Mediterranean basin.

The shared interests and challenges, at the heart of bilateral cooperation between the EU and Egypt, also underpinned efforts made by the Egyptian government in a wide range of areas, including economic development, sustainable water management, fighting terrorism and illegal migration. Furthermore, Italy wished to strengthen cooperation in the areas of migration and fight against terrorism, as well as in the field of energy and, in particular, gas, with a view to supporting the growth of the private sector in Egypt. The EU-Egypt cooperation is expected to continue driving forward sectors such as the rule of law, economy, migration, energy, security, environment and climate change. An individual case of particular interest to Italy, that of Giulio Regeni, is an example where there is a need to step up judicial cooperation, and, to this end, the request to the Egyptian authorities to share responsibility and investigate jointly with their Italian counterparts was reiterated by the Ambassador. Looking to 2019, many important visits, meetings and intense exchanges, especially the EU-League of Arab States Summit, which Cairo would be hosting, were expected. The important role of Egypt in the Middle East Peace Process, the Red Sea and Libya was also recalled.

Mr. Stavros HADJIYIANNIS, PSC Ambassador of Cyprus, acknowledged the strategic partnership between the EU and Egypt as a means to fulfil the full potential of their relationship. He reiterated Cyprus's strong support for EU-Egypt relations and mentioned the common interest to stability in the region and the shared goals of building a prosperous future for everyone, based on sustainable development, good governance and the rule of law. The role of Egypt is indispensable in fighting terrorism and in containing the impact of the unresolved Middle East Peace Process, in addition to being a valuable partner in tackling the challenges of irregular migratory flows. Furthermore, the Ambassador commended Egypt for organising the first ever EU-League of Arab States Summit. The country's ambitions to become a regional energy hub, which were fully aligned with the EU's aim of diversifying energy sources and achieving energy security, were also praised. Moreover, further development of the economic ties between the EU and Egypt, especially through the promotion of joint ventures, were encouraged, since the economic reforms undertaken had provided the necessary legal framework for advancing this kind of cooperation. Despite the fact that some elements of the country's structural reforms would need further development, for instance the empowerment of women and youth, some steps had been taken in this direction, such as the organisation of the National Youth Conference.

## **1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The agenda of the meeting, as set out in UE-EG 2802/18 was adopted.

## **2. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SEVENTH EU-EGYPT ASSOCIATION COUNCIL (BRUSSELS, 25 JULY 2017/DOC. EU-EG 2801/18)**

The Association Council took note of the draft minutes of the previous meeting held in Brussels on 25 July 2017, as set out in 2801/18.

## **3. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU-EGYPT PARTNERSHIP PRIORITIES 2017-2020**

The High Representative announced that the work developed with Egypt was fully in the spirit of the EU Global Strategy, as the EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities allowed to move forward towards a stronger and more strategic engagement in all priority areas, including socio-economic reforms, energy, trade, research, governance, human rights, migration, counterterrorism and regional issues. This commitment was clearly confirmed by the striking numbers of high-level visits from the EU these last years. The EU was strongly interested in the country's socio-economic sustainability, stability and security, primarily for the sake of Egypt and its people. In spite of remaining divergences on certain issues, the EU and Egypt stood shoulder to shoulder on subjects such as the economy, migration, counterterrorism, energy and climate action. The High Representative commended Egypt's active diplomatic role, including at the UN Security Council in 2017, and its upcoming Chairmanship of the African Union, which demonstrates Egypt's support to effective multilateralism and a rules-based international order.

Commissioner HAHN underlined the high level of cooperation between the EU and Egypt recalling the EU's recent support, together with its Member States, to Egypt's efforts to address challenges in a significant number of areas, including demography, economic development, education, health, energy, transport, environment, climate action, information society, research and innovation. He referred to the total of ongoing EU grant commitments to Egypt, which amounted to over EUR 1,3 billion, with around 45% of the portfolio targeting economic and social development, including job creation, 46% devoted to renewable energy, water and sanitation/waste management and environment, and 9% dedicated to supporting governance, human rights, justice and public administration reform, which could make a real difference to the lives of millions of Egyptians. He welcomed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Single Support Framework for 2017 and encouraged its swift ratification by the Egyptian Parliament, in order to avoid putting project funds at risk. He indicated the 2018 cooperation package has been adopted. It includes a focus on energy and water (EUR 20 million), fair access to inclusive basic services for the most vulnerable (EUR 12 million) and complementary support for capacity-building and civil society (EUR 24 million). He

explained that many of the project ideas forwarded by the Egyptian authorities during 2018 are reflected either in this package or in ongoing projects. He mentioned the EU was supporting the Egyptian authorities with the organisation of an Investors' Conference, to take place in Egypt led by the Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation and the Suez Canal Authority.

Commissioner Hahn announced that following recent developments, progress made towards meeting the eligibility criteria for budget support was sufficient for him to approve a positive disbursement decision for the transport sector budget support. He indicated that the situation of fundamental values and human rights in the country must be considered as part of such decisions. Hence he explained that any future disbursement requests under sector budget support operations would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. He recommended a strengthening of the dialogue between the EU and Egypt on human rights issues in accordance with the commitments enshrined in the Partnership Priorities.

Minister SHOUKRY thanked the representatives of the Member States underlining that bilateral relations with the EU countries were cherished by Egypt, as were the Partnership Priorities that had provided a great impetus to move ahead and reach new heights in the relationship with the EU. The 200 projects submitted to the European Commission corresponded to the priorities agreed and were also in harmony with the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy. The projects were also intended to benefit the country's reform programme, which also depends on higher growth, jobs and stability. In this regard, the ambitious public sector programmes had helped buffer the consequences of the inflationary trends and general rise in prices and had thereby contributed to building the population's trust in the country's leadership. With regard to its energy strategy, Egypt aims to become an energy hub and believes there are bright prospects for cooperation with eastern Mediterranean countries such as Cyprus, Greece, Italy, and with the EU, especially in the field of gas. At least 25 % of the energy investments would be in renewable energies so as to reduce emissions and take into account the environmental impact, an approach also pursued during Egypt's Chairmanship of the G77, when efforts were made to support the implementation and operationalisation of the Paris Agreement on climate change. Moreover, Egypt's potential of financial incentives was recalled, as were the country's extensive market and its relationship both with the Arab and African countries, which would contribute to the expected continental free trade agreement and result in tariff-free access opportunities for the European partners. On an issue related to the Association Agreement, the remaining tranches of the custom duties on EU passenger vehicles would be implemented shortly.



Commissioner HAHN confirmed that the Commission was studying the list of 200 projects in order to assess which activities, not yet covered, could be eventually included in upcoming larger programmes under the 2019 Annual Action Programme. Minister SHOUKRY underlined the option of a mid-term review of implementation of the Priorities, which would allow for any hindrances to be dealt with in a timely manner.

On the topic of **economic modernisation and entrepreneurship**, Commissioner HAHN noted with satisfaction Egypt's progress in macroeconomic reforms, which were restoring economic stability and providing a framework for sustainable growth. He welcomed progress on public finances management reform and hoped to see further developments in the fields of budgeting, accounting, treasury management, as well as tax administration. The ongoing dialogue on the G20 Policy Matrix, under the Compact with Africa, was also seen as a positive step. Regarding digitalisation, a major challenge for both sides, the EU's Digitising European Industry initiative of April 2016, proposed to accelerate digital transformation in all companies. One of its key elements was the establishment of Digital Innovation Hubs, which provided a model that Egypt could possibly replicate. In this context, he mentioned the DIGITAL4MED Conference to be held in January 2019 in Brussels as an opportunity to discuss how the successful digital transformation of the Mediterranean region could be promoted. Another cooperation area, Research and Innovation, was similarly important and could be further enhanced as Egypt had played an important role in regional research cooperation both in the Euro-Mediterranean context, and in the framework of the EU-Africa Research and Innovation Partnership. The EU appreciated Egypt's continued commitment to the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA). In the area of education, Egyptian universities had been actively involved in Erasmus+, especially with regard to capacity building projects. However, the EU was deeply concerned about a letter sent by the Egyptian Minister for Higher Education and Scientific Research to all university Presidents in the country, stating that: *'the Erasmus+ programme is aimed to impose values and concepts that seek to dismantle Egyptian society and families and hit the core of national basic values'*, mentioning homosexuality and tolerance of Jews in particular. The EU wanted to see a public commitment by Egypt to Erasmus+ programme as soon as possible, as well as a new letter rectifying the above mentioned message.

Minister SHOUKRY shared his concerns about the letter in question reassuring that it was not in conformity with the policies of the Egyptian government, and that, furthermore, its negative impact should be rectified.

In the fields of trade and investment, Minister SHOUKRY stated that the EU was Egypt's primary trade partner, a fact fully justifying Egypt's commitment, but he also recalled the financial returns that European companies received from investments in the country. He encouraged the EU and Europe to continue taking advantage of the 105 million population -market, the new investment law and the existing free trade arrangements.

Commissioner HAHN noted with satisfaction the increase in the bilateral trade of goods resulting from the EU-Egypt Free Trade Area in industrial goods and the bilateral agreement on agriculture. He indicated the EU remains ready to support reforms that would boost Egypt's capacity to benefit from opportunities under the Association Agreement and is committed to ensure a successful implementation of the Agreement's trade-related provisions. He welcomed the fact that automotive duties will be removed as of 1 January 2019 in line with the Association Agreement. He looks forward to Egypt's continued engagement to remove unnecessary barriers to trade which prevent the Agreement from reaching its full potential. In order to affirm its commitment to strengthen the economic partnership, the Commission was working on the organisation of an Investors' Conference in Egypt to showcase business opportunities and, in parallel, underpin the ongoing reforms. In order to boost Egypt's agricultural exports, there is continuous cooperation with Egypt on sanitary and phytosanitary issues, notably through the "Better Training for Safer Food" programme. In this context, Egypt's progress in complying with EU requirements had already resulted in the lifting of EU safeguard measures on grapes and strawberries, and the procedure to put Egypt on the list of countries authorised to export industrial gelatine to the EU had already been launched.

On social development and social justice, Minister SHOUKRY confirmed the importance of the topic for the Egyptian government, which was expecting greater stability for a large segment of the population after the implementation of economic, social and political reforms. He recalled the emphasis placed on youth and on investing in young people's education, on capacity development and the organisation of a National Conference on Youth with the aim of providing an opportunity for young people to get involved and build bridges with the government, including the Head of State. He underlined the measures taken to promote women's rights and parity in all segments of society, the social network to support vulnerable parts of the population and the government's efforts to work on urban planning for housing in an ambitious programme to provide Egyptians with regular dwellings, such, as for instance, the project in Asmarat.

Commissioner HAHN concurred that one of Egypt's main challenges to sustainable development was its rapid population growth, therefore the EU supports Egypt's National Population Strategy through an intervention from the UN Population Fund with EU funding of EUR 27 million. The ongoing commitment to support Egypt's efforts to promote social development and protection intends to address social and demographic challenges and to enhance the empowerment of youth and women in particular. The EU focuses its support on employment and social protection, rural and urban development, water management, and education and health systems to improve the delivery of high-quality basic services across the country and will support Egypt's efforts to protect children and people with disabilities from the impact of economic reforms through a programme of EUR 12 million. The EU will continue to support Egypt on women's empowerment and on preventing and combating sexual harassment and violence against women. Regarding youth, the EU is a strong supporter of improving access to education in primary schools, through programmes with UNICEF and World Food Programme worth EUR 90 million, with a particular emphasis on improving the quality of education and providing skills that match the labour market, and is ready to support the Ministry of Education's comprehensive reform plan by providing EUR 25 million in funds.

On **energy, security and climate action**, Minister SHOUKRY highlighted the diversification and increased availability of electrical power in Egypt as an achievement also addressing the needs for investment and economic activity. The diversification between traditional and renewable energy resources was an important step in enhancing the country's commitments to environmental and climate action. Despite pressure from some partners in the climate debate, Egypt was supporting international efforts to tackle the challenges in this area with the Minister stressing that the need to reduce emissions in accordance with the capacities of each partner had to be taken into account, particularly in Africa, where countries had to be supported if they were to play a greater role in mitigating the effects of climate change. The development of gas resources and the creation of an energy hub were expected to deal with Egypt's growing energy needs resulting from growing economic prosperity and greater industrialisation, but would also consolidate the political relationship between Egypt and the EU.

Commissioner HAHN underlined the value the EU attached to energy, security and climate action referring to the signature of the new Memorandum of Understanding on Energy for the period 2018-2022, which would support Egypt's reform efforts in the energy sector. He reassured participants that the EU would support Egypt's vision to become a regional gas hub and potentially

use the Egyptian LNG facilities to export gas and facilitate regional cooperation with other countries in the eastern Mediterranean, notably Cyprus and Israel. Egypt's Renewable Energy Strategy was very ambitious, so the EU would work further on boosting business cooperation on sustainable energy, including on energy efficiency, and on mobilising adequate investments in the sector. The EU appreciates Egypt's leading role in promoting regional cooperation, also in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean, which includes transport connectivity, and is keen to extend the TEN-T Trans-European Network to the Mediterranean region and to work together on transport standards. Bilaterally, the EU is committed to continue to work with Egypt, for example in the area of aviation safety where Egypt is encouraged to ensure adequate control over air carriers authorised to fly to Europe. Environment constitutes another area of common concern for the EU and Egypt, therefore, the EU welcomes Egypt's efforts to work on solid waste management, water and air pollution, without forgetting Egypt's role in the regional efforts towards the depollution of the Mediterranean. The EU is ready to work with Egypt on the transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient and circular economy that could bring significant transversal benefits, as demonstrated in the recent high-level workshop on the circular economy. The Commissioner commended Egypt for its role in international environmental issues, namely for successfully hosting the 14th Conference of the Parties of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and for Chairing the G77 and the African group during the negotiations on the Paris rulebook. The EU encourages Egypt to take advantage of the newly launched regional programme ClimaMED providing technical assistance, supporting local authorities and facilitating access to climate finance.

The High Representative introduced the topic of **cooperation in multilateral fora**, mentioning that the EU and Egypt held different views on a range of human rights issues, but also pointing out the importance of working together. She provided examples of an excellent cooperation, such as the EU-led resolution on freedom of religion or belief and the OIC-led resolution on combatting religious intolerance. The EU welcomed the close collaboration between the OIC and Egypt on the joint resolution on Myanmar in both the Human Rights Council and in the General Assembly Third Committee, which sent a strong signal of shared concern about the plight of the Rohingyas and the need to ensure that those responsible for human rights violations and abuses would be brought to justice. She trusted that Egypt's position on the funding of mechanisms to address the situation, including the new independent mechanism for collating evidence of atrocities, would reflect these shared concerns. Egypt was also commended for its support for the governance of peace operations through the Cairo Regional Centre for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding in Africa.

Minister SHOUKRY confirmed Egypt's interest in maintaining a high level consultation and cooperation with the EU in the multilateral arena in all areas with a view to structuring mutually supportive positions in order to enhance the multilateral system as a whole. He recognised the urgent need to reinforce the system through dialogue and cooperation. He reaffirmed that there were no divergences of opinion regarding human rights issues or the activities of the Human Rights Council stressing that the latter should be addressing issues of a general nature supporting jointly accepted values and principles, whilst avoiding all political manipulation. He underscored that Egypt would continue to support all initiatives enhancing the values of Human Rights and that the full dimension of human rights should be taken into account. However, specific characteristics of states should be also recognised together with their progress in this field and their efforts to improve the human rights situation. Minister SHOUKRY expressed his personal discontent regarding a position taken by the EU in the context of the establishment of the Middle East as a free zone from nuclear weapons, a complicated topic due to current issues, such as the threats regarding nuclear proliferation in the region. He called for the EU's role to be more proactive and positive, for example by creating a format for the regional countries to discuss the issue on the basis of consensus, in accordance with Article 7 of the NPT. In this regard, he encouraged an intensification of communication and recalled Egypt's role as coordinator on disarmament within the League of Arab States and its efforts in the various cycles of the 2015 NPT Review conference related to the reluctance of certain NPT parties to address the 1995 resolution and the international community's lack of political will to implement the resolution effectively.

Ms MOGHERINI replied to the Minister by providing details on the explanation of vote by the EU and its Member States at the UN, as well as on the joint reply to the letter from the League of Arab States to the EU, reaffirming full support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction to guarantee peace and security in accordance with the NPT. The EU considers the 1995 Resolution valid until its goals and objectives are achieved, and the EU strongly supports the outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference on the Middle East. The EU regrets that it had not been possible so far to convene a conference on the establishment of such a zone, as set out in the NPT Review Conference Action Plan in 2010. The High Representative reiterated the EU's strongest support for the establishment of the Middle East as a free zone of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. She underlined, however, that the process as set up by the Decision did not meet the criteria contained in the 1999 Guidelines of the UN Disarmament Commission, according to which such zones should be established on the basis of arrangements

reached freely among the states of the region concerned. Hence, the EU and its MS had difficulties in supporting the Decision put forward by the League of Arab States, which explains why the Member States had abstained on that occasion. Ms MOGHERINI concluded that dialogue and confidence building among stakeholders were the only sustainable way of agreeing on arrangements for a meaningful conference, as decided by the NPT Review Conference in 2010.

Minister SHOUKRY was happy to acknowledge EU's support for the issue, although he reaffirmed that the political will of all parties involved was the key factor in completing the process through consensus among participants. The current stalemate since 1995 could be no longer accepted. The goal of achieving non-proliferation in the region could only be met through the direct involvement and endorsement of the process by all. Ms MOGHERINI added that the most important factor for the parties was to share the same objective and to work jointly to achieve the common goals, as restated by all Member States in a clear and formal way.

On the topic of **enhancing stability and the modern democratic State**, Minister SHOUKRY recalled the transition process following the events in Egypt in 2011 and thereafter, the need for modernisation and the 2013 electoral process resulting in the reinstatement of governance institutions in accordance with a revised constitution which upheld the principles of good governance, separation of powers and administrative reform. Egypt's modern history had seen the introduction of quite extensive administrative functions that needed reform and scaling down, an area to which the government was committed. There was also the issue of a civic responsibility which had to be nurtured on a strong legal foundation. In the areas of security and terrorism, Egypt was doing its utmost to deal with the terrorist threat which emanated from neighbouring countries and had an impact on its own territory. Despite the great cost, Egypt is determined to eradicate all sources of extremism and terrorism and managed to disrupt a very intricate infrastructure of terrorist activities in the north-east of Sinai. Existing restrictions in European and other countries on the mutual provision of security surveillance and technological equipment to enable border monitoring, in some cases without a partner on the other side, was resulting in high costs. On the issue of migration, Egypt had shown its commitment, firstly by honouring its responsibilities towards the 5 million migrants that had chosen Egypt as a country of destination and who receive the same services provided to Egyptians, such as healthcare, education, the subsidies system and employment. In addition, recognising the importance that the EU attaches to the issue, since September 2016, Egypt has been enhancing its monitoring of the shoreline and the sea. The migration issue was also addressed through many programmes that generated employment and



created better economic conditions, thereby encouraging those who might be potential migrants to stay at home. The return of security and stability in Egypt, the development of the road infrastructure and improved housing conditions have also contributed to dissuading those who might have opted for migration by considerably improving their livelihoods. Moreover, Egypt is taking full advantage of and is working together with a variety of NGOs to provide social services and to address the economic situation, despite the ongoing debate in this context. Hopefully this divergence between Egypt and the EU would end once and for all following the Court of Cassation's closing verdict of not guilty in the longstanding trial of NGO employees from Germany and the US.

In the area of democracy and stability, Ms MOGHERINI reiterated the EU's strong commitment to the Partnership Priorities, of which human rights were an essential pillar, confirming the EU's awareness of the challenges posed by the terrorist threats to Egypt's stability and security, its economy and its people. Experience has shown that freedom of speech and a strong civil society help promote stability and peace, therefore any reports of human rights organisations and defenders facing pressure with arrests, asset freezes, travel bans, electronic surveillance and court summons are worrying. In this respect, the High Representative called on Egypt to implement its commitments to promote and protect the freedoms of expression, association and assembly, as well as freedom of the press and access to information, as guaranteed by the Constitution and in accordance with Egypt's international obligations. The EU was also concerned about certain articles of the cybercrime and media laws, which potentially restrict media freedoms and journalistic work, considering that both the EU and Egypt had a duty to fulfil obligations to protect freedom of expression and the safety of journalists by taking threats against them seriously and vigorously prosecuting actual attacks. As regards NGOs, the EU welcomed the Egyptian President's announcement for the creation of a committee for the revision of the NGO law, a process that would include 1,000 Civil Society Organisations, and to which the EU was willing to contribute, if requested, since non-governmental organisations were important implementing partners for its projects on the ground. The EU welcomed the decision to establish a Higher Permanent Committee for Human Rights to draft and follow up the implementation of a national human rights strategy, and also welcomed the "National Strategy for Combating Violence against Women 2015-2020", the "National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030" and the reforms of the inheritance law and the National Council for Women law. Egypt was party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and, in this context, was encouraged to join the Hague Convention on the civil aspects of international child abduction and endorse the Paris principles and commitments to

protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups. The EU and Egypt had some common achievements in the multilateral human rights fora, including the good cooperation at the 39th session of the Human Rights Council, on the EU-led resolution on Freedom of Religion or Belief and on the OIC-led resolution on Combatting Religious Intolerance. As Egypt would undergo its Universal Periodic Review in 2019, the EU was willing to engage in joint activities in order to achieve tangible improvements. The EU welcomed the fact that Egypt had hosted a meeting with the UN Special Rapporteur for Adequate Housing, but was however, concerned about allegations of harassment and intimidation against those who had spoken to the UN Special Rapporteur and provided her with information during the visit. President el-Sisi's statement on Egypt's commitment to religious freedom and his meeting with the EU Special Envoy for Freedom of Religious Belief in November were most appreciated. The EU was concerned about the use of prolonged pre-trial detention, which had been signalled by human rights defenders. The reports on enforced disappearances and torture were worrying, and Egypt was encouraged to shed light on the deaths of Giulio Regeni and Eric Lang and to bring about justice. Concerns were also raised as regards Law No. 161/2018, which granted President el-Sisi the power to select high-ranking officers for immunity from prosecution for any crime committed from 2011 onwards. The High Representative called on Egypt to suspend the passing and implementation of the death penalty against the backdrop of an increasing number of death sentences and address the issue of the military trials of civilians. As regards security, despite the political importance attached by Egypt to the listing of Gamaa al-Islamiyah, for instance, the outcome of the ongoing court challenge lodged by the latter was not yet known and would need careful analysis upon delivery of the judgment. In the area of joint cooperation, Ms. MOGHERINI highlighted the constructive meeting in Brussels on online terrorist propaganda and strategic communications. On migration, the High Representative commended Egypt's contribution to hosting refugees, its efforts to significantly reduce irregular migration flows, and smuggling and trafficking of human beings, as well as on the implementation of the Valletta Action Plan and the Khartoum Process. The engagement, at regional level, to address migratory challenges along the Central Mediterranean Route was key and the EU was willing to tailor its assistance to Egypt's needs and examine how to further enhance its support for the country's efforts on all aspects of migration management.

Commissioner HAHN mentioned the Financing Agreement on Accountability and Governance ('Annual Action Plan/AAP 2017'), which amounted to EUR 6 million and was intended to support effective, accountable and participatory governance. This was an important political signal indicating that the EU and Egypt could work on all issues together, as this measure included



components on the fight against corruption, the strengthening of asset recovery and on providing support to the House of Representatives' Training Institute. Under AAP 2018, upon Egypt's request, the EU was planning to allocate EUR 24 million to complementary support for capacity development and civil society with a view to assisting Egypt's public administration reform, enhancing its regulatory framework, accompanying progress towards e-governance and supporting the implementation of sector strategies benefiting from European expertise via the so-called twinning projects. On terrorism and counterterrorism, the EU was willing to move ahead with the counterterrorism package, namely on border management, including the projects with Interpol and Frontex, on training prosecutors on e-evidence and on the deployment of an EU expert to the EU Delegation in Cairo. On asset recovery, the ongoing ENI regional project worth EUR 2.7 million had performed well, and at the request of the Egyptian Public Prosecutor's Office, a dedicated bilateral programme had been integrated into AAP 2017, amounting to EUR 2 million. The ratification of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa by the Egyptian Parliament, a programme worth EUR 60 million was expected, in tandem with the second High-Level Meeting of the Migration Dialogue, to strengthen cooperation on migration issues, in particular border management, returns and registration also complemented by bilateral migration dialogues and bilateral agreements on returns. The goal was to maximise cooperation on dismantling migrant smuggling crime networks, and, in this regard, Egypt's growing cooperation with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, the European Asylum Support Office and the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation was greatly appreciated. Finally, with a view to the data protection safeguards, the Commissioner invited Egypt to start negotiations for an agreement on the exchange of personal data with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL).

Minister SHOUKRY underlined the need to address specific facts and objected to subjective perceptions of how the Special Rapporteur on Housing had been received and had been given access and protection for her own benefit. Egypt had nothing to hide as regards housing, an area in which the government was proud of its achievements, and hoped that the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council and the Secretariat of the Council would be more professional in the future. The Minister did not wish to address issues related to the death penalty and other subjects, where he stated that each side held different views. However, he drew attention to the fact that, due to the characteristics of the Egyptian legal system, verdicts might have been issued at first instance, but the extent of implementation of these penalties had to be monitored following appeals to the Court of Cassation. On issues of security and terrorism, which was a global phenomenon and needed to be

addressed comprehensively, Egypt was concerned that asylum in various countries of the EU had been given to the leadership of terrorist organisations. As for migration flows, there is a constant dialogue with the EU on how to make the most comprehensive use of commitments and enhance cooperation, taking into account political and socio-economic issues from the perspective of countries of origin, transit and destination.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

The High Representative concluded by thanking Minister SHOUKRY for the fruitful discussions which would allow *inter alia* to project a positive message to the general public, also with a view to further cooperation. The joint preparation of the upcoming Summit between the EU and the League of Arab States in Sharm el-Sheikh in February 2019 was a valuable asset in this respect.

Minister SHOUKRY thanked the High Representative, Commissioner Hahn and Member States' representatives. He reiterated the valuable relationship that Egypt had with the 28 and mentioned the long-standing cultural and historic ties with partners in the Mediterranean region. He underlined the importance of the relationship with the EU and the desire to take full advantage of its achievements, which Egypt sought to emulate in the wider region.

## **4. POLITICAL DIALOGUE ON REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES**

*This point was treated in the informal part of the Association Council.*

## **5. A.O.B**

*No issue was raised under this item of the agenda.*

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**ASSOCIATION  
BETWEEN  
THE EUROPEAN UNION  
AND EGYPT**  

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**The Association Council**

**Brussels, 18 December 2018  
(OR. en)**

**UE-EG 2802/18**

**NOTE**

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	8th EU-Egypt Association Council - Agenda

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Adoption of the agenda of the 8th EU-Egypt Association Council

Adoption of the minutes of the 7<sup>th</sup> EU-Egypt Association Council

Exchange of views on the implementation of the EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities 2017-2020

Political Dialogue on regional and international issues<sup>1</sup>

A.O.B.

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<sup>1</sup> Point to be dealt with in the restricted session

**DELEGATION OF the ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT**

H.E. Mr. Sameh SOUKRY, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Ambassador Khaled EL BAKLY, Ambassador of Egypt in Brussels

Ambassador Amr RAMADAN, Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs

Ambassador Raouf SAAD, Chairman of the National Bureau for the Implementation of the Egypt-EU Association Agreement

Minister Plenipotentiary Amr EL-SHERBINI, DCM, Embassy of Egypt, Brussels

M. Ahmed Abou MOUSSA, Cabinet of Foreign Minister - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

M. Abdelmohsen SHAFEY, First Secretary - Embassy of Egypt, Brussels

M. Mohamad WAHISH, Commercial Office - Embassy of Egypt, Brussels

\* participants in the restricted session

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**DELEGATION OF THE EU**

Federica MOGHERINI, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy\*

Johannes HAHN, Commissioner European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations\*

Stefano GRASSI, Head of Cabinet Mogherini\*

Oliver RENTSCHLER, Deputy Head of Cabinet Mogherini\*

Emma UDWIN, Member of cabinet Hahn\*

Colin SCICLUNA, Deputy Managing Director EEAS\*

Michael KÖHLER, Director DG NEAR\*

Ivan SURKOS, Head of Delegation of EU to Egypt\*

Jerome CASSIERS, Chair, MaMa Working Group\*

Erika FERRER, Head of Division EEAS\*

Michael MILLER, Head of Unit DG NEAR

Sibylle BIKAR, Deputy Head of Division EEAS

Maria LENSU, Policy officer EEAS

Gediminas VARANAVICIUS, Policy officer EEAS

Leonardo SCHIAVO, Director General, RELEX – Foreign Affairs, Enlargement and Civil Protection\*

Kim FREIDBERG, Director, RELEX 2 - Enlargement, Security, Civil Protection, Foreign Affairs Council Support \*

Kimmo PEIPPO, Head of Unit Security, Foreign Affairs, Enlargement and Civil Protection

Dimosthenis MAMMONAS, Co-Secretary of the EU-Egypt Association Council, Political administrator, in charge of MAMA Working Group

Katja de SADELEER, Policy officer, DG NEAR

Fidelma O'SHAUGNESSY, Policy officer, DG NEAR

Antonino CREA, Team Leader NEAR

Sara CANALI, Intern EEAS

\*participants in the restricted session.

**EIGHTH MEETING OF THE EU-EGYPT ASSOCIATION COUNCIL  
(BRUSSELS, 20 DECEMBER 2018)**

**Statement by the European Union**

1. The European Union welcomes the eighth meeting of the EU-Egypt Association Council. The EU-Egypt partnership, which we seek to strengthen, is based on the implementation of the Association Agreement that entered into force in 2004, and on the joint Partnership Priorities (PPs) 2017-2020, adopted in 2017. The Priorities include support to Egypt's sustainable economic and social development, reinforcement of our partnership in foreign policy, and enhanced dialogue and cooperation in the stabilisation process, notably in the fields of democracy, good governance, the rule of law, human rights, security, counter-terrorism, energy and migration, with a special focus on the empowerment of youth and women as a cross-cutting theme. In line with the EU Global Strategy, the EU has a strategic interest in Egypt's sustainable stability, security and prosperity, both internally and regionally, and is firmly committed to support Egypt's path towards a modern and democratic state.
2. The EU attaches great importance to its bilateral relationship with Egypt, as an important partner and regional player, as demonstrated by the visits of the President of the European Council Tusk, Commissioners Hahn, Cañete and Avramopoulos, EU Special Representatives, the Chair of the EU Military Committee as well as numerous visits by Member States at the highest level.
3. The holding of all the sub-committees under the Association Agreement, as well as of the Association Committee in November 2018, allowed for increased dialogue on the implementation of the Partnership Priorities and for the joint identification of areas of potential cooperation. In the past year, the EU, together with its Member States (MS), supported Egypt's efforts to address the challenges faced by the country in a significant number of areas, including economic development, education, health, energy, transport, environment, climate action, water management, combatting terrorism, information society, research and innovation. People-to-people contacts are also at the heart of EU-Egypt cooperation.

4. Europe is the most important donor in Egypt, with an ongoing combined volume of financial assistance from the EU, its Member States and European Financial Institutions to Egypt in its different forms (grants, loans and debt swaps) of over EUR 11 billion. The EU contribution of EUR 460.2 million in blending grants in recent years has succeeded in leveraging approximately EUR 8.85 billion in loans.

Total ongoing EU financial assistance commitments to Egypt amount to over EUR 1.3 billion in grants, with around 45% of the portfolio targeting economic and social development, including employment creation, 46% devoted to renewable energy, water and sanitation/waste management and environment, and 9% dedicated to supporting governance, human rights, justice and public administration reform. The EU Annual Action Programme 2018 amounts to EUR 111 million and puts particular emphasis on energy and water, providing fair access to inclusive basic services to the most vulnerable as well as complementary support for capacity development and civil society.

5. Since November 2016, Egypt has been implementing an ambitious economic reform plan supported by the IMF's USD 12 billion programme under the Extended Fund Facility. Egypt has succeeded in stabilising its economy, accelerating economic growth and reducing unemployment. In order to go beyond economic stabilisation to strong, sustainable and inclusive growth, Egypt must now focus on structural reforms, while continuing prudent fiscal policy to keep public debt on a sustainable path.
6. The EU firmly supports Egypt's efforts to achieve strong, sustainable and inclusive economic growth, notably through the implementation of the IMF-supported economic reform programme. The EU welcomes the extensive economic reforms Egypt has already undertaken, including in overhauling subsidies and liberalising the currency. Continued reforms should contribute to economic recovery, attract investment, boost growth and create decent job opportunities. The EU stands ready to support and contribute to Egypt's efforts in this direction, notably in establishing an enabling business environment, implementing sectoral reforms, public finance management reforms and addressing the social and economic impact of adjustment, particularly on the most vulnerable, through the development of a well-targeted social protection system.

7. The EU and Egypt are major economic partners. With bilateral trade in goods amounting to EUR 27.9 billion in 2017 and EU investments of EUR 42.8 billion in 2016, the EU ranks first as Egypt's major trade and investment partner. In 2017, the EU accounted for 29.7% of the total foreign trade value of Egypt. The EU is looking for a continued strong economic partnership with Egypt. In this respect the EU welcomes Egypt's commitment to reduce the import tariffs on motor vehicles to zero as of 1 January 2019 in line with the Association Agreement. However, a number of long-standing trade and investment barriers, including technical barriers to trade, continue to affect EU-Egypt trade cooperation. The EU calls for a joint commitment to address these impediments to trade in order to further facilitate trade and investment in line with the EU-Egypt Association Agreement and the WTO commitments.
8. Egypt already benefits from a duty free and quota free access to the EU market for industrial goods and also for most agricultural products. The EU will continue to support Egypt in its efforts to improve its export performance by boosting its general export capacity and competitiveness and achieving a closer integration into global value chains. The EU wishes to continue strengthening the ongoing dialogue with Egypt on further enhancing bilateral trade relations, including by exploring options to further facilitate and deepen trade and investment.
9. In a context where rapid population growth represents a major challenge to the sustainable development of the country, the EU is supporting Egypt's National Population Strategy. The EU supports Egypt's efforts to promote social development and protection, to address the social and demographic challenges and to enhance its capacities to advance sustainable economic and social development, and to create employment, particularly for youth and women. In this regard, the EU will continue its support to the country on employment and social protection, rural and urban development, water management as well as education and health systems, including sexual and reproductive health, in order to contribute to improving the delivery of quality basic services across the country. Finally, the EU will broaden its efforts to promote social justice by supporting Egypt's efforts to protect children and people with disabilities from the impacts of economic reforms.
10. The EU welcomes Egypt's progress towards achieving Education for All and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in expanding access to basic education, and closing the gap between the enrolment of boys and girls. The EU remains a strong supporter of the Egyptian education sector as a whole, with particular emphasis on increasing the access to education for the most vulnerable children, the modernisation and quality of education,



including Technical and Vocational Education and Training and Egyptian Higher Education, to provide skills matching the labour market. In addition to the EU's substantial bilateral support in this sector, Egypt's active participation in EU programmes such as ERASMUS+ (in the fields of higher and non-formal education) also plays a key role. Between 2015 and 2018, 2550 scholarships/fellowships have been approved to support Egyptian students and university staff to move to Europe to study, teach or train and 1145 Europeans received support to move to Egypt, making ERASMUS+ a success in both directions.

11. The EU and Egypt will continue to work together in the field of research and innovation, mainly through Horizon 2020 projects. Furthermore, the EU values Egypt's commitment and active involvement in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA).
12. In its bilateral support to Egypt, the EU will continue to place particular emphasis on women and youth, taking into account their crucial role in sustainable socio-economic development and long-term political and overall stability. It will also continue to promote People-to-People contacts through enhanced cooperation in the field of culture and cultural heritage, at bilateral level, as well as via regional EU programmes.
13. Considering Egypt's ambition to become a regional energy hub, sustainable energy security is key for the EU and Egypt's stability and development. A new Memorandum of Understanding on Energy covering period 2018-2022, signed in April 2018, paves way for strengthening energy dialogue in order to identify potential areas of enhanced cooperation for the benefit of both sides and the Mediterranean region, including by taking advantage of existing relevant facilities in Egypt, as well as of project for possible interconnectivity of the power grids of the neighbouring EU Member States as well as of other relevant projects with interested EU MS. The EU supports renewable energy development in Egypt and works on further boosting EU-Egypt business cooperation on Sustainable Energy including on Energy Efficiency and on helping on the mobilisation of adequate investments in the sector. The EU is also strongly committed to the African Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI) and to cooperating closely with its members, including Egypt, to launch new projects. Recalling that it has developed EU-led risk and safety assessments ('stress tests') of nuclear power plants, the EU reiterates the need for full compliance with international environmental and nuclear safety standards.

14. Environment and climate change is another area of requiring urgent action. The EU commends Egypt for hosting COP14 of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and welcomes the “Sharm El-Sheikh to Beijing Action Agenda for Nature and People” launched during this COP 14. The EU will continue to support Egypt's efforts and reforms in the fields of solid waste management, water and sanitation, air pollution and sustainable transport, as well as Egypt's contribution to the regional efforts for the de-pollution of the Mediterranean. The EU welcomes Egypt's Chairmanship of the G77 and the African Group of Climate Change Negotiators and reiterates the shared goal to deliver a successful outcome at UNFCCC COP24, consistent with the spirit and the letter of the Paris Agreement, and with the conclusions of the 1.5°C IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report. The EU will continue to cooperate with Egypt in the area of environment and climate change with the broader objective of achieving the goals identified, inter alia, in the 2030 Development Agenda.
15. The EU fully recognises and appreciates Egypt's efforts in preventing irregular migration, in fighting smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings, in addition to Egypt's significant contribution in hosting refugees and migrants. The EU welcomes Egypt's efforts to improve its national legislative and coordination framework through the adoption of relevant by-laws and of the “National Strategy on Combating Illegal Migration” (2016-2026). The EU recognises the active role played by National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Human Persons (NCCPIM & TIP) re-established through Prime Ministerial Decree No. 2353 of 2010.
16. Following the President of the **European Council** Tusk's visit to Cairo, the EU looks forward to further strengthening its cooperation with Egypt on all aspects of migration as part of a broader partnership framed in the EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities, further shaped by the formal EU-Egypt Migration Dialogue in 2017 as the forum to address all aspects of a stronger, more strategic and comprehensive cooperation on migration and reaffirmed by the **European Council** on 18 October 2018. The EU has offered specific support to Egypt in addressing migration challenges through a EUR 60 million programme of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) and looks forward to its ratification by the Egyptian Parliament. As the EU and Egypt deepen their cooperation on migration, the EU stands ready to discuss how to tailor its assistance to Egypt's needs and to examine how to further enhance its support to Egypt's efforts on to address migration challenges. The EU is also ready to step up its on-going support to Egypt's efforts to strengthen its migration and asylum governance

framework, to protect the rights of refugees and migrants and to provide protection to those who qualify for it, in line with international standards, and search for durable solutions, including voluntary resettlement. The EU looks forward to an enhanced exchange of information and a reinforced cooperation in the fight against smuggling, including within the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community (AFIC) and through the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCGA), within the limits of the applicable legal frameworks.

17. The EU and Egypt will continue to strengthen cooperation on return of irregular migrants to their country of origin, in accordance with international law. This goes hand in hand with cooperation in addressing root causes of forced displacement and drivers of irregular migration, in particular underdevelopment, poverty, climate change and unemployment. While respecting national competences, facilitation of legal pathways to migration including circular mobility schemes can contribute to the development of skills and knowledge which could in turn contribute to the development of Egypt. The EU and Egypt have a mutual interest in strengthening dialogue and cooperation in this field, through the implementation of the Joint Valletta Action Plan and the existing multilateral fora, such as the Khartoum process in which Egypt is actively involved, the African Union and the League of Arab States. In light of the positive developments on the migration agenda, the EU looks forward to holding its next session of the Migration Dialogue in early 2019.
18. The EU has a strong interest in Egypt's sustainable stability and security. As agreed in the PPs, establishing a modern and democratic state that delivers benefits equitably to all people is essential in this regard. The entry into force in January 2014 of the new Constitution, which includes robust provisions on human rights and individual freedoms, and the parliamentary elections held in October and December 2015, constituted two important steps towards enhancing democracy in Egypt. The EU looks forward to the provisions of the Constitution on the rule of law, human rights and individual freedoms being fully implemented and existing and new legislation being in line with these provisions. The EU stands ready to support Egypt in translating these rights into law as agreed in the EU-Egypt PPs.
19. The EU supports Egypt's commitments to enhance State institutions' accountability, efficiency, independence and transparency. In addition to the support that the EU has already been providing to Egypt in past years to reform the public administration, improve public finance management, and fight corruption, the EU stands ready to further support Egypt in these crucial areas, including improving the capacity of the Parliamentary Training Institute.

20. The EU remains concerned about the continuing restriction of space for civil society in Egypt and pressure put on human rights organisations and defenders, including through arrests, asset freezes, travel bans, electronic surveillance and court summons. Civil society actors are key contributors to sustainable social and economic development, to the democratic consolidation processes and the promotion of human rights, helping to build sustainable stability and security. It needs to be allowed to operate in an enabling environment. The EU welcomes the positive role played by the Anna Lindh foundation, based in Alexandria, in engaging with Civil society organisations (CSOs) for the promotion of cross-cultural dialogue and highlights Egypt's important role as a host country. The EU reiterates its calls on the Egyptian authorities to shed light without further delay on the circumstances of the death of the Italian citizen Giulio Regeni and the French citizen Eric Lang and to identify and prosecute those responsible for these odious crimes, fully cooperating with the authorities of the concerned Member States on these cases.
21. The EU is concerned about the subsequent consequences of the NGO law of 2017 on NGOs' activities and the space for debate and discussion in the country. It is necessary to ensure that the future implementation of the law does not additionally undermine fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Egyptian Constitution and constrain civil society's contribution to political, economic and social development as highlighted in the PPs. To this end the EU welcomes the announced revision of the law and urges Egypt to engage in meaningful and inclusive consultations with civil society. Some provisions, such as the ones related to the registration process, the activities the NGOs are allowed to perform and the procedure for receiving domestic and foreign funding, are also likely to directly affect European cooperation assistance to Egypt. Indeed, a large part of EU and MS cooperation relies on civil society organisations as important implementing partners. The EU is available, should the Egyptian authorities so wish, to contribute to this reflection.
22. The EU is concerned about the efforts to limit freedom of expression and opinion, as seen with the arrest and the sentencing of journalists and bloggers on anti-state charges, continuous blocking of news websites and other measures limiting access to information and freedom of expression on the internet, including social media. The EU is also concerned about the potential restrictive impact of the cybercrime and media laws, on media freedoms and journalistic work. The EU calls on Egypt to be in line with its commitments to promote and

protect the freedom of expression, association and assembly, as well as the freedom of the press and access to information, as guaranteed by the 2014 Constitution and according to Egypt's international obligations. The EU encourages Egypt to improve the situation with respect to civil and political rights, including freedom of expression both online and offline, and to review its legislation in accordance with international law and with the Constitutional guarantees with respect to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

23. The EU acknowledges the government's commitment to promoting women's full enjoyment of all human rights and their social and economic empowerment, and welcomes the adoption of the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030 and amendments to the Inheritance Law, and encourages Egypt continuing its efforts in this regard. The EU will continue supporting Egypt on women's empowerment, preventing and combating sexual harassment and violence against women, notably through the National Council for Women and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood.
24. The EU notes that Egypt is party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and that its candidate has been elected to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In this context, the EU encourages Egypt to endorse the Paris Principles and Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups. Furthermore, the EU encourages Egypt to join The Hague Convention on the civil aspects of international child abduction.
25. The EU remains concerned about reports of torture, enforced disappearances and poor detention conditions and encourages Egypt to address these issues, including through the access to all detention centers by independent monitors in accordance with national laws. The EU is concerned about the recent Law Governing the Treatment of Certain Senior Commanders of the Armed Forces and underlines the need for accountability for all violations. Increase in the handing down of death sentences, executions and mass trials, as well as military trials of civilians are also of particular concern. The EU reiterates its principled position against the death penalty and calls on Egypt to establish a formal moratorium with a view to its abolition. The EU encourages Egypt's participation to the 7th World Congress Against the Death Penalty which the EU will co-host with Belgium in February 2019.

26. The EU takes note of Egypt's participation in the UPR midterm review and its engagement with the UN Special Procedures and encourages Egypt to issue a standing invitation to all Special Procedures. The EU calls Egypt to investigate allegations that people who met with the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing were subjected to pressure or reprisal for meeting with her. The EU appreciates Egypt's recent hosting of the EU Special Envoy for freedom of religion or belief outside the EU. The EU welcomes Egypt's' decision to establish a Higher Permanent Committee for Human Rights with a mandate to draw up a national human rights strategy and follow up its implementation.
27. Sustainable security is a shared objective for the EU and Egypt and a central element of the EU Global Strategy. The EU is fully aware of the serious destabilising threats and challenges that Egypt's stability and security is facing, primarily terrorism and the impact on the Egyptian population, the state institutions as well as the country's economy, including tourism. The EU strongly condemns acts of terrorism in Egypt including against security services and the military, as well as attacks against religious communities, including Copts, and places of worship and stands in solidarity with Egypt in its fight against terrorism. The EU and Egypt have a common interest in strengthening cooperation on security and countering terrorism. The EU and Egypt will continue to progress on CT cooperation, in line with the EU-Egypt PPs' commitment to promoting and respecting democracy, fundamental freedoms and human rights as constitutional rights of all citizens, and to enhancing the capacity of law enforcement institutions to provide security to all in full respect of these obligations and norms. Following the adoption of Council's decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations for an agreement between the EU and Egypt on the exchange of personal data with Europol with appropriate data protection safeguards, the EU calls on Egypt to continue working to strengthen cooperation with Europol and to enter into negotiations with the Commission on such an agreement.
28. The EU acknowledges the serious and destabilising security challenges faced by Egypt that led to the State of Emergency. In this respect, the EU strongly encourages Egypt to address the concerning consequences of the ongoing state of emergency for the respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. The EU reiterates its position that arbitrary arrests, long pre-trial detention, poor prison conditions and torture contribute to fuelling radicalism and violent extremism. It highlights the importance of tackling terrorism and violent extremism in full respect of human rights and international obligations and recalls the Constitutional provisions that apply to the declaration of a State of Emergency.



29. An effective Counter Terrorism effort needs the support of the public, and respect of the rule of law. The EU is concerned about amendments to the Judicial Authority Law. The EU recalls the importance of the independence of the Judiciary, as guaranteed by the 2014 Constitution.
30. In line with the 2013 transition roadmap to democracy, the EU also encourages Egypt to take steps to foster national reconciliation and youth inclusion that are key to Egypt's long term stability. The EU notes the efforts made in this direction through the National Youth Conference.
31. With its upcoming Presidency of the African Union in 2019, Egypt has a key role to play in the whole region and beyond. As strategic regional actors, the EU and Egypt have a shared interest in continuing to reinforce their cooperation in foreign policy and in particular addressing the main regional challenges, including in Libya, Syria, the Middle-East Peace Process, Yemen and in Africa. It is in our interest to continue to enhance dialogue and cooperation on these issues both at the bilateral and multilateral levels, including in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean. The EU welcomes Egypt's decision to host the EU-League of Arab States' Summit on 24-25 February 2019.
32. The EU acknowledges that the instability in Libya poses significant security and humanitarian pressures on its neighbours, including Egypt. The EU and Egypt share the view that there can only be a political solution to the Libyan crisis and will continue their respective efforts, bilaterally or within regional organizations, to support the UN-led political process aimed at bringing stability, peace and prosperity for all Libyans. The EU remains fully committed to an inclusive Libyan owned political process. The EU and Egypt are committed to support the recalibrated UN Action Plan endorsed at the Palermo conference, with a view to hold a National Conference and complete the electoral process by Spring 2019; to consolidate security in Tripoli and throughout the country, fully implement the new security arrangements and establish regular security forces; and to complete structural monetary and fiscal reforms, such as the subsidy and wage bill reforms, needed to address the economy of predation in Libya and ensure a fair and sustainable distribution of national resources. All those who undermine the political process or threaten the stability of Libya will be held accountable. Subject to further developments, the EU stands ready to consider the application of additional sanctions.

33. Regarding the situation in Syria, the EU welcomes Egypt's ongoing commitment to the UN process for the resolution of the crisis, as well as to the defeat of Da'esh and all UN designated terrorist groups in Syria, including through the efforts of the Global Coalition. The EU urges the maintenance of the Idlib lasting ceasefire and the unimpeded humanitarian access to all Syrians in need. As the Council reaffirmed in April 2018, any sustainable solution to the Syria conflict requires genuine political transition in line with UNSCR 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué. The EU strongly supports the resumption of intra-Syrian talks within the UN-mediated Geneva process and the efforts to convene the first meeting of the constitutional committee before the end of this month. The EU recognises the active role played by Egypt in the “Small Group” which supports the UN process. In consideration of Cairo's active role within the League of Arab States, the EU seizes the opportunity to reiterate that now is neither the time to normalise relations with Syria, nor to and reintegrate Syria into international bodies. The EU stands ready to assist in the reconstruction of Syria once a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition on the basis of UNSCR 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué is firmly under way. War crimes and possible crimes against humanity need to be investigated thoroughly and independently, and perpetrators held accountable. Furthermore, the EU notes that in order to allow for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of Syrian refugees, the conditions, as defined by UNHCR, must be in place. The EU remains committed to the support of Syrian refugees and IDPs as well as refugee-hosting countries.
34. The EU recognises Egypt's indispensable role and will continue to engage closely with Egypt in pursuing a just, sustainable and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the two state solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign, and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition in line with relevant Council Conclusions, and with Jerusalem as capital of the two states. The EU will continue to respect the international consensus on Jerusalem embodied in UN Security Council Resolution 478 of 1980. The EU and Egypt will continue to work towards that end with both Israeli and Palestinian counterparts, and all other relevant stakeholders in the region, in particular in the framework of the Arab Peace Initiative. The EU will continue to support Egyptian efforts towards the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under one single and legitimate Palestinian Authority.
35. The war in Yemen has created the world's gravest humanitarian crisis, ravaging the country, inflicting unprecedented suffering on its population and undermining regional stability and



security, including in the Red Sea. The EU reiterates the urgent need to support the UN Special Envoy for Yemen as he attempts to resume political negotiations between the parties to the conflict. De-escalation is key in this regard. The EU has therefore called on all the parties to show restraint and participate constructively in the ongoing UN-led consultations. The EU is committed to providing concrete support, including through confidence-building measures, at the request of the UN Special Envoy. The EU will continue its political, developmental and humanitarian engagement with Yemen.

36. The EU reiterates its preoccupations with regard to the ongoing Gulf dispute a year and a half after it started. It stresses the importance of unity within the GCC for the stability of the Gulf region and for the efficiency of our collective efforts to deal with regional issues such as the fight against terrorism. The EU continues to discuss the negative effects of the crisis with all the parties and stands ready to assist Kuwaiti mediation efforts in ways which can lead to a regional détente. The EU has the firm intention to keep strong relationships and ties with all the Gulf countries and hope that they will manage to restore good relations among them.
37. In Africa, the EU and Egypt have a common interest in working together constructively to promote closer regional cooperation to reinforce this region's capacity to address the many challenges it is facing. In this regard, the EU welcomes Egypt's upcoming Presidency of the African Union in 2019. The EU also looks forward to working with Egypt for their mutual benefit in the context of the Post-Cotonou Agreement negotiations. The EU is keen to strengthen engagement with Egypt and other stakeholders in a cooperative and predictable manner on issues regarding dialogue on the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa, while preserving the local ownership of the region. The EU also welcomes the ongoing trilateral talks between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The EU stands ready to engage in support of further cooperation on the Nile, at the request of all the parties.
38. The EU-Egypt Partnership has been reinforced since the adoption of Partnership Priorities in July 2017, on the basis of a closer dialogue both on issues on which we agree and on which we differ, in a spirit of mutual trust and openness. Regular assessment of the progress made in the implementation of the PPs, through the various mechanisms foreseen in the PPs and through regular political dialogue, should allow us to continue to maintain this positive momentum, in the interest of our people and region.

**EIGHTH MEETING OF THE EU-EGYPT ASSOCIATION COUNCIL  
(BRUSSELS, 20 DECEMBER 2018)**

**Statement by Egypt**

1- Egypt welcomes the eighth meeting of Egypt-EU Association Council. The EU is Egypt's largest trade partner and its major partner in the area of development cooperation. Egypt and the European Union are indispensable partners, for their own internal and external strategic interests and their partnership has successfully withstood the test of time.

2- Egypt and the European Union enjoy historic, multifaceted and diverse relations spanning over many areas of cooperation. The Partnership Priorities for the period 2017-2020 adopted during the 7th Meeting of the Association Council, held in Brussels on July 25th 2017, under the co-chairmanship of H.E Mr. Sameh Shoukry Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt and H.E. Mrs. Federica Mogherini Vice President of the European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, testify to the wide range of areas of mutual interest and common challenges that cover, inter-alia, sustainable economic modernization and social development, social justice, energy security, environment, climate action, in parallel with a partnership in foreign policy, which covers a wide range of bilateral issues of mutual interest, towards achieving stability of the Mediterranean region at large, particularly in combating terrorism, illegal immigration, organized crime and human trafficking, as well as cooperation in the multilateral fora.

3- Egypt looks forward to undertake a full-fledged joint mid-term review to assess the progress in the implementation of the Partnership Priorities, to take into consideration the lessons learnt in future cooperation, to ensure the proper functioning of the partnership mechanisms and meaningful and productive results.

4- This important progress was motivated by a strong political will from both sides to usher a new era of cooperation. Egypt emphasizes that this council provides both sides with an opportunity to review what has been achieved since last year in the implementation of the Association Agreement, and to accelerate and deepen our cooperation, as well as discussing in a transparent manner the difficulties and differences

that might occur, with a view to reaching a mutual understanding and managing them. Overall the dialogue that took place during this cycle has been very promising, since all discussions on the technical aspects have shown mutual interest to further promote and explore new avenues for cooperation and remove obstacles to this cooperation. To name, but a few, one can highlight the following:

- Achieving significant progress in many spheres, especially since we managed to convene all subcommittees during this cycle, in discussing constructively issues of mutual concern, even those where we disagree. The Association Committee that was held in Cairo on November 8th 2018, undertook a serious assessment of the progress achieved by the subcommittees, along with further political discussions on regional and international issues.
- Constructive discussions took place on the great progress achieved by Egypt in the implementation of its ambitious economic reforms within the Sustainable Development Strategy: Egypt's Vision 2030, in tandem with a solid social safety net, along with considerable progress in areas such as fighting corruption and terrorism, the establishment of human rights departments in all ministries and governorates, the national strategy for women...
- Egypt announced at the above mentioned Association Committee its decision to remove the two remaining tranches of customs duties on EU passenger vehicles, so as of the 1st of January 2019 there will be zero custom duties on such vehicles.
- Many concrete cooperation proposals from both sides have been explored by the subcommittees, notably in the areas of agriculture, justice, transport, civil aviation, counter terrorism, combating corruption, women, youth ....
- The President of the Arab Republic of Egypt has issued Presidential Directives tasking the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to prepare through an integrated national coordination process, a comprehensive package of priority partnership projects with the EU until 2020, consistent with the Sustainable Development Strategy: Egypt's Vision 2030, resulting in submitting around 200 projects to the EU for consideration. Egypt emphasizes that this process is irreversible and will continue as the political and institutional framework for the cooperation with the EU under

the revised European Neighborhood policy and the Association Agreement. We expect that the EU will engage positively in this process, especially because of its direct link with Egypt's National Plan, and since this avails the EU with an excellent opportunity to show case its contribution to Egypt's economic and social development. Egypt signed and ratified the agreement allowing its participation in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Initiative PRIMA, and earned its co-chair membership, which could meet requirements of research and innovation in areas of crucial importance for Egypt and the Mediterranean region.

- The 9th meeting of the Egypt-EU Economic Dialogue in July 2018 witnessed constructive discussions on the principle areas of Egypt's economic and social reforms, and confirmed the progress achieved by Egypt in that regard. The EU reiterated its strong support of these reforms, and its interest in expanding and deepening its cooperation in these ambitious and effective reforms.
- Egypt has been one of the major proponents of the Cross Border Cooperation Programme CBC in the Mediterranean Basin and is among the main beneficiaries and participants in this programme. Egypt considers that CBC is a success story and a promising model to promote co-development and people-to-people cooperation from the two banks of the Mediterranean.

5- The large number of visits that have taken place between the Egyptian leadership and several Heads of States and Governments consolidated ties between Egypt and the EU member states to develop deep and strategic partnerships. Suffice it to mention the visits of H.E. President Abdel Fattah El Sisi to several European capitals and the visits to Cairo by H.E. Mr. Sebastian Kurtz the President of the EU and H.E. Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council. H.E. President El Sisi met again H.E. President Tusk on the margins of the high-level segment of the UNGA later in September, and met again H.E. Mr. Sebastian Kurtz in Vienna this December 2018.

6- Such momentum has also been accelerated by the exchange of visits and regular meetings at the ministerial and senior official levels between Cairo and Brussels. Mr. Johannes Hahn EU Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations visited Egypt in October 2017. H.E. Mr. Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt visited Brussels in May and July 2018 and met H.E.

Mrs. Federica Mogherini, Vice-President of the European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

7- Exchange of visits between the Egyptian House of Representatives and the European Parliament as well as with a number of Parliaments of a number of EU Countries, proved instrumental for facilitating deeper mutual understanding between the Parliaments of both sides, of the transformations and developments in Egypt and the European Union. The chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives visited the European Parliament in Strasbourg in December 2017. The Speaker of the House of Representative visited the European Parliament in Brussels in June 2018. A delegation for the relations with the Mashreq countries from the European Parliament visited Egypt at the end of October/beginning November 2018.

#### Economic Reform Program in Egypt:

1- Egypt embarked on a homegrown comprehensive reform program in November 2016, supported by a \$12 billion loan from the IMF (Extended Fund Facility). Since then, the government has been strongly committed to economic policy reform as it adopted a number of necessary measures, such as the introduction of value-added tax (VAT), the adoption of a flexible exchange-rate policy, and a series of fuel subsidy cuts.

2- It is important to mention that providing social safety nets is a crucial component of Egypt's economic reform in order to mitigate its negative impact on the most vulnerables of the population through targeted programs.

3- Egypt's government took important steps towards improving the business and investment environment through structural and legislative reforms including inter-alia, the new Investment Law, the Industrial Licensing Law and the Bankruptcy Law. These steps stem from a firm belief that entrepreneurship is a key component of a dynamic economy, and that small and medium sized enterprises play a pivotal role in stimulating the economy and in the economic empowerment of women and youth.

4- Starting 2014, a series of National Mega Projects were launched to act as drivers for the economy via attracting investments, creating job opportunities and boosting growth. The list of projects includes The New Suez Canal and its economic zone as a

world-class free zone and trade hub; the establishment of a number of new cities including the New Administrative Capital; a comprehensive network of highways and roads connecting various parts of the country; fisheries and agricultural projects.

#### Environment and Climate Change:

1- Preserving the environment is a priority. There is a strong conviction of the cross-sectoral nature of environmental issues and their impact on almost all economic sectors, as well as their strong link to the efforts aimed at achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication. This vision was incorporated in detail in Egypt's Sustainable Development Strategy "Egypt 2030".

2- With this in mind, and in light of its Chairmanship this year of the Group of 77 and China and the African Group of negotiators on climate change, no effort was spared to ensure the success of climate change negotiations during this crucial year, which aims to operationalize the Paris Agreement. Based on that, we strongly supported and contributed to the global effort dealing with the impact of climate change, including through adaptation to its negative effects, as well as mitigating emissions. To this end, Egypt took the initiative of inviting lead negotiators from the EU to hold bilateral consultations, first with their African counterparts, and later to hold direct consultations with the lead G77 and China negotiators.

3- Furthermore, Egypt hosted the 14th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Sharm El Sheikh from 17th to 29th November 2018. The conference witnessed constructive cooperation between Egypt and the European Union, be it on organizational matters – for which the EU provided support – or on the substantive matters under discussion. The EU also welcomed and pledged support for the Egyptian initiative launched by President Al Sisi at the conference which aims to promote a coordinated approach to address biodiversity loss, climate change and land and ecosystems degradation.

#### Counter Terrorism:

1- The growing threats and common challenges of transnational terrorism and extremism phenomenon faced by Europe and the Middle East necessitate that both Egypt

and the EU stand united against it. It is now evident to all that this global phenomenon is not associated with a specific region, religion, culture, or level of economic development, as it has become an existential threat to regional and international peace and security. In this context, Egypt looks forward to further enhancing cooperation and coordination with the European Union to address the root causes of this scourge from a holistic and an integrated perspective. This comprehensive approach should include the security, socio-economic development and ideological aspects of this phenomenon.

2- Based on this approach, Egypt actively participated in drafting several UN Security Council resolutions in addition to its contribution to reinforcing regional and international counter-terrorism efforts. Egypt will also continue these efforts during its presidency of the African Union in 2019. Furthermore, at the national level, Egypt established in 2017 the National Counter-Terrorism Council chaired by the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt. This National Council includes all the ministries concerned and representatives of educational, socio-economic development and religious entities with the aim of formulating a "Comprehensive Counter-Terrorism Strategy".

3- Egypt's approach to eradicate terrorism and extremism is also evident in "Operation Sinai 2018", which is carried out in North Sinai specifically in the area located between "Rafah" and "Sheikh Zuweid" that represents 2-3% of the total area of North Sinai. This operation, which is conducted in full respect to the principles of human rights, has made significant progress since its launch in February 2018. Egypt's law enforcement authorities have significantly succeeded by virtue of this operation in eliminating terrorist threats, while securing public utilities and providing inhabitants with necessary financial support and subsidies. Furthermore, the Governor of Northern Sinai convenes a permanent committee on a weekly basis to develop and implement comprehensive and sustainable development programmes.

4- Egypt believes that defeating terrorism will not be realized without countering its underlying "takfiri" ideology. In this regard, Egypt would like to reiterate that we cannot afford to separate between the spread of radical thought and terrorist ideology on the one hand, and the perpetration of the terrorist act in the end. Both are interconnected, it is illogical to criminalize the act and turn a blind eye to the instigator in total contradiction to the international community's declared commitment to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.



5- In this regard, Egypt recalls that all terrorist groups must be combated on equal grounds and not through a selective approach. The reality on the ground shows that all terrorist groups in the region, despite the difference in their names and strategies are affiliated to the same network of interest and stem from the same sickening ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood terrorist organization.

6- On the other hand, there is a dire need to further enhance the Egypt-EU cooperation to take joint effective measures against cybercrimes and the exploitation of information and communications technology, such as the internet and social media, for terrorist purposes, which has become a "qualitative" threat to regional and international peace and security. The dissemination, by the terrorist organizations, of manipulative messages, extremist ideology and hate speech to attract and recruit terrorists, including FTFs especially among youth, aims at undermining State institutions leading to a political and social vacuum to be filled by sectarian and terrorist groups.

7- Egypt looks forward to strengthening cooperation with the EU to effectively counter this phenomenon and to support Egypt's efforts aiming at removing the terrorist narratives online and collecting digital evidence of these crimes from the internet to bring those terrorists and their supporters to justice. This is in conformity with the UNSC resolution 2354 (2017) and the "Comprehensive International Framework to Counter Terrorist Narratives". Here a distinction must be made between "the right to freedom of expression" and the misuse of this right for terrorist purposes.

8- In this context, the EU is urged to take swift and serious actions to stop the broadcasting of extremist media channels belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood terrorist organization from European satellites, which calls for terrorist attacks against Egyptians and foreigners in Egypt. In this regard, the EU should take into consideration the potential risks Europe is also exposed to, due to the proliferation of this extremist and terrorist propaganda, by these channels, to audiences in Europe and the Middle East.

9- Meanwhile, Egypt will pursue its relentless efforts to effectively address this problem's root causes by discrediting the terrorist's wicked ideology. In this regard, Egypt would like to highlight the important role of its religious institutions, led by "Al-Azhar" to develop religious discourse, as well as of its Observatory and the one of "Dar El-Iftaa" to combat extremism and to create a counter-narrative based upon the true essence of Islam.



10- Furthermore, there is an urgent need to strengthen the Egypt-EU cooperation to foster counter financing terrorism mechanisms. This should include the detection and tracing of any financial transactions conducted by terrorist groups or persons, including FTFs, or by transnational organized crime networks. Serious and firm actions should also be taken against States and entities that make any financial transactions or use some civil society and charitable organizations as a cover to raise funds for terrorist purposes, in order for us to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorism.

11- Joint efforts must also be made to ensure that any State providing any form of support, directly or indirectly, to facilitate the movement of terrorists across its borders or by supplying them with weapons or financial, logistical facilities or providing them safe havens, be held accountable, in conformity with the UNSC resolutions 2368 and 1373. Egypt would like emphasize the continued negative role played by some regional powers in this regard, in clear violation of the UNSC resolutions 2396 and 2370.

12- In this context, it is of paramount importance for the EU to continue implementing capacity-building programmes based on a country specific approach. It is also crucial to provide the States in need, upon their request, with adequate technical and technological resources, in accordance with their national priorities and based on the principle of "the national ownership", with a view to supporting their efforts in meeting their international obligations under the UNSC resolution 2396 and, thus generating impact on the ground.

13- Egypt is also keen to continue cooperation with the EU on Counter-Terrorism through their co-chairmanship of the GCTF Capacity-Building in the East Africa Region Working Group for the period 2018-2019. On the other hand, Egypt and the EU will coordinate their efforts in other agreed bilateral projects on counter-terrorism. With regard to Counter Terrorism efforts, Egypt reiterates its request to the EU to undertake all necessary measures to amend the European Directive for Audiovisuals (2007), in order to close TV channels affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood terrorist group, which incite violence, terrorism and hatred.

#### Migration:

1- Egypt believes that migration is a multi-faceted phenomenon, and recognizes the high degree of interdependence between the Mediterranean region and Europe, in recent

years, to face the challenges related to the sharp increase of refugees and migrants which entails suffering, abuse and exploitation, particularly for children and women, and unacceptable loss of life in the desert or at sea.

2- Egypt also believes that the migration issue should be tackled in a balanced and comprehensive manner. Adequate focus needs to be placed not only on short term solutions aiming at stemming the flow of migrants and refugee seekers, but also on medium and long term strategies tackling the socio-economic root causes of migration. This is best achieved by supporting sustainable development and boosting inclusive growth in countries of origin and transit, particularly by creating employment opportunities and revenue-generating activities for youth, as well as opening safe and orderly channels of legal migration.

3- Egypt has demonstrated unwavering commitment to address irregular migration, by focusing on institutional and legislative reforms, awareness rising, capacity building on national authorities in charge of migration issues. In 2016, the Egyptian Parliament adopted the law no. 82 on Combating Illegal Migration & Smuggling of Migrants, which complements the law no. 64 for 2010 on Combating Human Trafficking, which both created a powerful deterrent effect to stem the phenomenon of smuggling and trafficking of persons. These efforts have been accompanied by the Egyptian endeavours to tackle domestic root causes of migration, with special focus on youth through the creation of job opportunities and enhancement of inclusive growth, especially targeting those areas that highest rates of migration.

4- In addition, Egypt has exerted tremendous efforts to control its borders. Since September 2016 till now, almost no boat was registered leaving the Egyptian shores on the central Mediterranean route. This is due to the extensive work undertaken by the Egyptian border and coastal guards, that bear a huge burden to fight all forms of organized crimes and terrorism. This remarkable achievement was planned and implemented solely relying on national resources and capacities.

Egypt is a transit country in terms of geographic location on the central migratory route originating from the Horn of Africa and the Middle East. It is also becoming a destination country, recording substantial increases in the arrivals of asylum seekers and irregular migrants in recent years. Their actual numbers significantly exceed those officially registered by the United Nation High Commission of Refugees, due to Egypt's adoption of a dignified approach towards refugees by refraining from restricting their

movement to camps or retention centers. Based on a firm commitment to upholding its humanitarian responsibility and moral obligation, Egypt is shouldering a cumbersome financial burden by hosting almost five million refugees and asylum seekers who don't reach out to UNHCR, due to their ability –especially those from Arab countries – to enjoy the protection and the services provided by the Government almost on equal footing with their Egyptian compatriots.

5- The Egyptian government is working very closely with the UNHCR to provide necessary protection to the refugees according to 1951 Convention and 1967 protocol. As of 31st of October 2018, Egypt hosts around 240,000 registered asylum-seekers and refugees from 58 countries, including Syria, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan, Yemen, Somalia Iraq and others. Syrian refugees represent 55% of the total registered refugees in Egypt. According to the UNHCR statistics, the number of registered asylum seekers has increased by 15% this year in comparison with last year, coupled with limited support to the resilience of host communities, as well as sharp decrease is the number of resettlement.

6- Egypt and EU agreed to enhance cooperation to address challenges and opportunities related to migration. The high-level institutional Migration dialogue between Egypt and the European Union was launched in Cairo on 16th of December 2017, in the presence of Sameh Shoukry, Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Dimitris Avramopoulos, European Commissioner for Migration and Internal Affairs, followed by the first round of Migration Dialogue that took place on 17th of December 2017. Ever since, several coordination meeting and bilateral visits were undertaken, or about to take place in the near future, to discuss ways and means to reinforce intuitional cooperation between Egyptian Government and the EU institutions, namely the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), EASO, EUROPOL and EUROJUST.

7- Egypt benefited also from the European Trust for Africa. In October 2018, the financial umbrella agreement for the Enhancing the response to Migration Challenges in Egypt (ERMCE) was signed, worth EUR 60 million to fund 7 projects according to the national priorities of the Egyptian side and in accordance with the Joint Valletta Action Plan. The necessary constitutional steps are currently undertaken by the Egyptian Parliament to adopt this agreement. Nevertheless, Egypt believes the EU should extend more support to Egypt, as one of the major transit countries on the migratory route in

North Africa to Europe, and consider endorsing further projects, especially in the field of tackling socio-economic root causes of migration, as well as opening legal channel and facilitating mobility with Europe.

8- In November 2017, Egypt received two new regional projects for the North African countries (worth EUR 25 million). The first is related to cooperation in the dismantling of criminal networks involved in human trafficking and human trafficking in cooperation with UNODC; In their home country in cooperation with IOM. The government approved these projects, but up to date no implementation has started.

9- On the regional level, Egypt plays an active role whether on the African level, especially through the African Union – Horn of Africa initiative, or on the European level, through the Khartoum Process. Egypt participated actively in Valletta Summit in 2015, and continues to play a constructive role in the implementation of the Political Declaration and Joint Valletta Action Plan. In November 2018, Egypt participated in the Second Senior Official Meeting to follow up on the Joint Valletta Action Plan in Addis Ababa, and reiterated its belief that the JVAP is an opportune tool to foster the regional cooperation between Europe and Africa in the field of migration, provided that its five priority domains are being implemented in a synchronized and balanced manners, while observing the interests of all parties concerned.

10- Egypt encourages also the creation of synergies between the different regional initiatives dealing with migration, based on the Conclusion of the Luxor trilateral meeting between the AU Horn of Africa Initiative, the Khartoum and Rabat Processes, that took place in November 2017. Such synergies will contribute to advance joint efforts in addressing common challenges and avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts.

#### Human Rights:

1- The 2013 revolution demonstrated in an unambiguous manner the Egyptian people's steadfast determination to realize human rights in a democratic society, and the Government of Egypt has an unyielding resolve to meet these aspirations and maintain course. This public volition was translated in the stipulations of the 2014 Constitution, and the laws are being reviewed by the House of Representatives accordingly, so as to

ensure that the provisions of the Constitution on the rule of law, human rights and individual freedoms are being fully implemented. On its part, the Government is committed to enhancing State institutions' accountability, efficiency and transparency, and is keen on promoting and protecting all human rights for all, including individuals' and public safety.

2- Serious steps are underway to tackle unemployment and provide social protection manifest the Government's commitment to the realization of the human right to work, particularly for women and youth. Additionally, ongoing efforts focus on providing education for all with EU support, not only to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but also the obligation in this respect under International Human Rights Law. The gender gap has already been bridged in primary and secondary education, while the number of female and male university graduates is now almost equal, and both are afforded equal access to the labour market, as well as equal pay. The recent adoption of the Health Insurance Law on the other hand aims at realizing the human right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and funds were allocated to initiate the first phase in July 2018. Egypt looks forward to the support of international partners, including EU, to improve the delivery of quality health services.

3- Egypt's determination to the realization of all human rights to all its citizens is unwavering. The Government has devised indicators to measure progress in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as part of the implementation of its Program of Action for the period 2018-2022, entitled "Egypt Embarks". Human rights education was introduced in the academic year 2018/2019 in schools and universities. Invitations to six Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council were extended, and the first visit took place in September/October 2018. In November 2018, the Cabinet of Ministers decided to establish a Supreme Permanent Human Rights Commission, with a mandate to develop a national strategy for the promotion of human rights, prepare periodic reports to human rights treaty-bodies, and to interact with regional and international human rights mechanisms.

4- With an independent judiciary that has evolved over the centuries since the inception of the Egypt's modern court system in 1522, checks and balances are well in place. Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression, and the right to

peaceful assembly, are all guaranteed under the Constitution and law, in accordance with Egypt's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

5- Articles 185 and 186 of the Egyptian Constitution guarantee the independence of the judiciary, and recognize the rule of law as the basis of governance. The Constitution also affirms the separation of powers and the balance between them in a way that ensures no interference or influence over the work of the judiciary. In fact, interference in the judiciary is an imprescriptible crime according to Article 184. The immunities granted to judges are thus unassailable. Egypt prides itself on having established after two consecutive revolutions a democracy that is capable of correcting itself. Therefore, attempts to shed doubts about the Egyptian judiciary would only serve to undermine the rule of law as a basic foundation for a democratic society instead of reinforcing it, hence damaging the primary guarantor for protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. On the other hand, opinionated criticism directed at the judiciary would incautiously lend justification and support to the vile terrorist threats and attempts on the lives of a number of public prosecutors and judges.

6- No legal immunity may be rendered to those who violate the law under any pretext, be they human rights offenders or defenders. Meanwhile, the correction of a deficiency in the legal justice system –if any- may only take place through the legislative or the legal justice system itself, with full respect to due process. Grievances or appeals regarding a court decision should only be dealt with within the legal system, including claims of torture, arbitrary arrest, and extended pre-trial detention. The guarantees in the Constitution of the rights of individuals whose liberty is restricted are fully observed, in accordance with Articles 9, 10 and 14 of ICCPR.

7- Based on a firm belief that a free and vibrant civil society is necessary to create a modern democratic society, an inclusive national dialogue was launched under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Solidarity to review the Non-Governmental Organisations Law, following a call made by H.E. President Abdel Fattah El Sisi at the World Youth Forum in Sharm El Sheikh in early November 2018. The call heeds to the repeated demands of national civil society organisations, which were expressed after the adoption by the House of Representatives of Law 70 of 2017 at the initiative of some of its members.

8- The empowerment of youth, women and persons with disability comes at the top



of the Government's agenda. 2018 was declared the Persons with Disability Year, while 2016 was the Egyptian Youth Year and 2017 was the Egyptian Woman Year. Several activities and initiatives were unleashed in this respect, based on the principles of Citizenship and Equality, in the areas of housing, job creation, financial inclusion projects to name only a few, as well as the adoption of the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women: Vision 2030. Egypt continues its strenuous efforts to combat violence and discrimination against women and girls, including sexual harassment and inheritance deprivation, and wishes to benefit from the experiences and lessons learnt of EU Member States in eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women, particularly those reported to sustain high rates of violations in this regard.

9- On the other hand, Egypt is concerned that the European Union continues to give itself the liberty to pass judgements on the human rights situation in the country, based on ill-founded allegations, and without taking into consideration the exceptional terrorist threats Egypt is currently confronting. This is particularly paradoxical in light of the fact that a number of EU Member States have taken exceptional measures in response to the terrorist acts they face, hence suspending in practice a number of their commitments under International Human Rights Law, be it as regards immigrants and asylum seeker, restricting the freedom of movement, or infringing on the liberty of the person and the right to privacy, while failing in many instances to address acts of xenophobia, discrimination and violence.

10- Reports that indicate that the principle of non-refoulement is being ignored by some European authorities when it comes to refugees and asylum-seekers are very disturbing and run counter to the obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention. Measures to give border control authorities in a number of EU Member States a larger liberty to deport immigrants in the absence of due process raise concern. Allegations of prevalent discriminatory treatment against those individuals, whether as regards housing, healthcare services, education, employment or else, raise serious concern. Accordingly, EU Member States are urged to review their immigration strategies and governance frameworks, to protect the rights of refugees and immigrants, to provide protection to them in law and practice, in line with international standards, and to pursue creative and durable solutions for their settlement. Continuing the ongoing practice to group immigrants in controlled centres or camps is derogatory to the human dignity that all



nations seek to respect. Due attention should be given to family reunifications and humanitarian considerations, and the EU Member States are urged to consider acceding to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families of 1990.

11- The disproportional use of force to disperse public demonstrations has become a recurrent phenomenon in EU Member States in recent years. Obligations to respect the rights to freedom of association and to peaceful assembly under International Human Rights Law need to be observed, and international standards should be met. Reported police brutality, mainly against immigrants and individuals belonging to certain racial, ethnic or religious backgrounds, runs counter to the principles of equality before the law and non-discrimination. EU Member States are encouraged to review these measures, and to put in place anti-discrimination mechanisms, in accordance with their obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It is equally a matter of major concern that extended pre-trial detention and prison conditions in a number of EU Member States are reported to be the causes for breeding fanaticism and potential terrorists amongst inmates, in addition to a surge in the death toll amongst prisoners. EU is urged to consider the necessary measures to improve the living conditions of those incarcerated, and to address the root causes of fanaticism in EU societies.

12- While education and awareness-raising are essential tools to tackle incitement to hatred, discrimination and violence, they may only be effective when utilized in tandem with reinforcing the rule of law and combating impunity, based on full respect of the principles of equality and non-discrimination. In this context, Egypt calls for the disclosure of the results of investigation into the racial motives behind the murder of the Egyptian student Shaden Mohamed in the city of Cottbus in April 2017.

13- Moreover, Egypt is concerned at the state of freedom of expression in some EU States. The arbitrary arrest of a journalist at Helsingin Sanomat newspaper at her home without a warrant under the guise of national security is a worrying case in point. The following justification of the arrest by a court of law sheds serious doubt about due process and the independence of judiciary. Particularly alarming in this context is the murder of two journalists in two EU states to silence their voices. Egypt calls upon these two EU countries to investigate those cases without further delay.

## NGO's:

1- The Egypt –EU partnership priorities 2017-2020 clearly emphasize the important role of civil society as a key partner in supporting the economic and social development process in Egypt, in accordance with the provisions of the Egyptian Constitution and the relevant national legislations. Egypt firmly believes that a vibrant and empowered civil society is one of the fundamental pillars for achieving its sustainable development goals, which is embodied in "Egypt's vision 2030". Egypt is thus keen on maintaining an effective balance between preserving and promoting civil society's valuable role, and the need for transparent regulation of civil society activities under a unified legal umbrella. The initiative announced by H.E President Al SISI last month to review Law.70 of 2017 on regulating the work of civil society, reflects a positive response from the political leadership to all the concerns raised in that regard. It affirms the Government's keenness to enable the civil society to play its role as a key partner in the development process. A national committee presided over by the Minister of Social Solidarity has been established, with the participation of representatives of all concerned authorities, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with an aim to reach a comprehensive vision regarding the amendments, while taking into account similar international experiences, and allowing for a wider engagement of all actors of civil society.

2- Egypt is concerned about the shrinking space for civil society in some member states of the European Union, including by tightening control on both domestic and foreign funds. Despite the importance, the European Commission attaches to the existence of a vibrant civil society, and to a regular and transparent engagement with civil society actors, civil society is unfortunately facing pressures in many parts of the EU. The importance of preserving and protecting the civil society space has become more pressing in our time. To this end, Egypt urges the European Union and its institutions to deeply engage with its member states on this matter.

## Iran:

- Egypt shares the EU's deep concerns regarding Iran's regional policies, in particular its intervention in the internal affairs of other arab countries. It should be emphasized that the implementation of all legal obligations related to the non-

proliferation of nuclear and all weapons of mass destruction obligations is fundamental in efforts to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions, and to ascertain the pursuance of requisite steps towards advancing a Middle East Zone free from nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction.

#### Syria:

1- Egypt's priority in Syria is twofold: supporting the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, whilst preserving the national unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian State and maintaining its core institutions; and combatting terrorism. Egypt stresses on the need to find a political solution to put an end to the Syrian crisis, one that would preserve the integrity and independence of Syrian territory and fulfill the aspirations of the Syrian people within the framework of the outcome of the Geneva negotiations process and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

2- Egypt expresses its appreciation for the efforts of the UN Special Envoy Stephane de Mistura during his mandate, and welcome the new Special Envoy, and will help him to build on his predecessor's efforts to pave the way for more profound direct talks between the opposition and the Syrian government, and to set up the constitutional committee as a key step toward elections and a political settlement to the Syrian conflict.

#### Libya:

1- Egypt and the EU share the conviction that the Libyan Political agreement is the only framework for resolving the Libyan crisis, and they affirm the importance of supporting the efforts of Dr. Ghassan Salame the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to Libya and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to facilitate a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political solution without any external interventions. Egypt is seeking to bridge the gap between the Libyan parties in order to convince the Libyan parties to adhere to the political process, confirming in this regard the importance of combating terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations, Egypt continues to exert efforts to unify the Libyan military institution through hosting six rounds of negotiations between Libyan army personnel, as this unification process

represents the cornerstone for any viable plans for the political process in Libya.

2- Egypt and the EU welcomed the establishment of the new security arrangements in Tripoli, and stressed the need to rely on the deployment of regular forces to replace the armed militias, and to be implemented as a model in various parts of Libyain case of its success. They also discussed the urgent need to address the major issues in the south especially the ones pursuant to security in this area. The Two sides also expressed their concerns with regards to the presence of armed militias, foreign opposition groups and organized crime syndicates which undermine the endeavors to develop this vital area.

#### MEPP:

- Reaching a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East remains a top priority for Egyptian foreign policy and one of the vital prerequisites of overall stability in the region. Egypt and the EU share the conviction that the only viable settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the two state solution, and Egypt is committed to continuing our unwavering efforts with all parties towards this end. The just and legitimate aspiration of the Palestinian people to establish their independent state and their right to self-determination must be realized through putting an end to the Israeli occupation and establishing a viable Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Egypt will continue to coordinate with our EU partners and other key players on ways to revive an effective and conclusive Middle East Peace Process.

#### AR-EU summit:

- The Arab Republic of Egypt looks forward to organizing and hosting the First Arab/EU summit. This upcoming historic summit is an opportunity for the leaders of both sides to provide strategic direction to relations between Arab and EU states, with the aim of fostering stability in our region and giving added impetus to mutual cooperation in different fields.

#### EU voting pattern on the Arab draft Decision on the establishment of a Weapons of Mass

### Destruction free zone in the Middle East:

- Egypt deeply regrets that the EU decided to abstain on the Arab Group Decision entitled "Convening a Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction" that was tabled in October 2018 at the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, to address serious security imbalances throughout the Middle East region, particularly upon the failure of consecutive Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to do so. Egypt trusts that this position poses a stark contrast to previously expressed positions by the European Union in this regard, and could be perceived as undermining confidence in its commitment to nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation, particularly in a troubled region such as the Middle East. Hence, with some trepidation, this position agitates anxiety and dreads tantamount to non-compliance to the NPT and Review Conferences outcomes, obligations and the 1995 resolution on the middle east, and as such detrimental to the upcoming 2020 NPT Review Conference.

### Nile Basin Countries:

1- Egypt is keen on engaging in trilateral co-operation between Egypt, the European Union (EU) and the Nile Basin countries with a view to undertake co-operation activities between the Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development (EAPD) and its specialized European counterparts in the following sectors:

- In the health Sector (Building Hospitals and clinics or capacity buildings in the fields of training midwives and specialized nurses) or
- In the Infrastructure Sector (Digging and purifying wells or constructing or the maintenance of power conversion and electrical generation plants or co-operating in the field of clean and sustainable energy or
- In the Agricultural Sector (capacity buildings in the specialised centres such as: The International Centre for Agriculture or

- In the field of Capacity Building leadership and administrative skills especially amongst women and youth.

2- The capability to engage in contractual undertakings (in the form of Memoranda of Understanding or Exchanged letters) between Egypt (represented by the EAPD) and its corresponding specialised European Institutes in order to implement the above mentioned suggestions.

#### Nile water:

1- The continued delay in the studies of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam as well as in the Independent Scientific Group (established by the Nine Party Mechanism to promote mutual understanding of the Renaissance dam and provide different filling and operational scenarios) is a source of concern for Egypt.

2- Egypt accepted the inception report while Ethiopia and Sudan did not accept it. The inception report is a mile stone to enable the consultant to proceed with performing the requested studies on the impacts of GERD on the downstream countries. Egypt is exerting efforts to persuade the Ethiopian brothers to send all the observations and queries of the three countries on the inception report to the Consultant for reply and coordinating with brothers from Sudan and Ethiopia to enable the Independent Scientific Group to resume its meeting and fulfill the mandate assigned to the Group by the Nine-Party Mechanism.

3- Egypt notices that the recently agreed upon conclusions by the European Council's meeting in November 2018 does not reflect the reality related to the developments regarding the negotiations on the GERD.

4- Egypt would also like to point out that the conclusions related to water diplomacy have overlooked a very important issue, namely, the rules that must govern the work of companies in connection with the implementation of projects on shared rivers and the necessity of completing all relevant studies of this project before proceeding to contribute to its implementation.

### Horn of Africa:

- 1- Egypt welcomes the recent positive developments in the Horn of Africa which constitute a step toward stability in the region.
- 2- Egypt is keen on establishing balanced and constructive relations with all the countries of the Horn of Africa in view of historical connections and strategic interests, as well as Egypt's concerns with regards to the threats of terrorism, trans-boundary organized crime, piracy, human trafficking and arms smuggling.

### Egypt's Presidency of the African Union:

- 1- During its upcoming chairmanship of the African Union in 2019, Egypt is looking forward to expediting the operationalization of the continental free trade agreement (AfCFTA), promoting intra-African investments, encouraging the cooperation between African private sector, and adopting an ambitious plan of action to implement major regional infrastructure projects. Egypt will also work to enhance and develop African capacities and tools in the field of peace and security in Africa. Sectors such as conflicts prevention and post conflict reconstruction and development will be allocated significant attention. Egypt is looking forward to cooperate with strategic partners including the European Union to achieve the goals of the African agenda 2063 and the sustainable developmental goals 2030.
- 2- Egypt fully supports unifying the African voice in cooperation with the EU regarding the Pan African issues within the existing AU mechanisms and Agreements with the EU. Egypt believes that the unity of the African Voice should not come at the expense of the specificities of the relations between the EU and other African Regions and States, and reiterates its strong objection to any institutional or financial integration of the current contractual agreements with the EU, due to the fundamental differences of economic and social situations of the African States and the very nature of the relations of the EU with different African groups of Countries, let alone that such an integration would create an unhealthy competition among African States over limited financial resources and bring back such arrangements to a donor-recipient relationship.
- 3- Egypt is following closely the recent developments of "Brexit", and its possible implications on both the EU and the UK. We are confident that the EU, with all its



achievements through more than 60 years, will endure this challenge and consolidate its unity and contributions worldwide. To this end, we believe that the partnerships between the EU and different parts of the world could contribute to strengthening and pursuing its indispensable role, bilaterally, regionally and internationally. We, therefore, believe that these partnerships should receive a priority attention, which will fall in line with the interests of the EU and its partners.

4- It is only fair to state that as Egypt and the EU have well started a new phase of their partnership guided by mutual respect, shared interests and common challenges, this partnership must be pursued with objectivity, transparency, equality and judgment free approaches as fundamental governing principles of political cooperation between both sides. Differences in views on certain issues are a normal component of a real partnership. Egypt stands ready to address mutual concerns on any aspect of Egyptian-EU relations within the proper bilateral frameworks outlined in the Egypt-EU Association Agreement, as reiterated in the agreed Egypt-EU Partnership Priorities (2017-2020). Addressing differences with prudence in a true spirit of partnership is the only proper response to both sides' commitment to constructive political dialogue.

5- In conclusion, over the past seven years, Egypt has been undergoing a challenging historical transformation towards establishing a vibrant and genuine democracy. As the Egyptian people lay the foundations of a civil, democratic and modern country that can realize the aspirations of its present and future generations, it expects our partners in the EU to appreciate the challenges associated with this difficult transformation, stand by and support Egypt's unprecedented endeavors to rebuild the society, which falls in line with the interests of all parties, including the EU.

**JOINT PRESS STATEMENT FOLLOWING THE 8TH ASSOCIATION COUNCIL  
BETWEEN THE EU AND EGYPT**

The eighth session of the Association Council (AC) of the European Union and the Arab Republic of Egypt took place in Brussels on 20 December 2018. Both sides recognized the great importance of their partnership in addressing their political, economic, social, security and cultural interests and in confronting their common challenges in the region.

The eighth session was co-chaired by HE Sameh Shoukry, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt and Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in the presence of Johannes Hahn, the Commissioner of European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations.

The session re-confirmed the broader engagement of the EU-Egypt relations, based on the joint Partnership Priorities under the revised European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) as well as the Sustainable Development Strategy: Egypt Vision 2030, which guide our dialogue and cooperation for 2017-2020.

The Association Council addressed the implementation of the joint EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities, adopted during the seventh Association Council in July 2017. The Partnership Priorities provide a basis for a reinforced and mutually beneficial bilateral partnership and a stronger strategic engagement in areas of common interest, to address common challenges, to promote joint interests and to guarantee long-term stability on both sides of the Mediterranean. This partnership includes support to Egypt's sustainable economic and social development, good governance, the rule of law, human rights, migration, security, counterterrorism, and cooperation in foreign policy through intensified consultations on regional and international issues.

The Association Council recognised the solid and accumulated EU cooperation with Egypt, which amounts to over EUR 1.3 billion of ongoing grants, to support Egypt's economic, social and political development to improve the future prospects of its people and contribute to stabilization and long-term prosperity. This work is carried out in parallel with efforts to help in particular youth and women. The latest project signature is related to the Kitchener Drain depollution project in Egypt and took place in Sharm El Sheikh in early December. The EU investment of EUR 46.9 million will contribute to

the development of a sustainable modern economy.

In this context the Association Council welcomed the adoption of the 2018 cooperation package by the European Commission on 29 November 2018, with a focus on key socioeconomic sectors such as energy and water (EUR 20 M); fair access to inclusive basic services to the most vulnerable (EUR 12 M) and complementary support for capacity building (EUR 24 M). The package will also strengthen the role of Egyptian civil society organizations as drivers of social and political development.

The EU reiterated its support to Egypt's efforts to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth, notably through the implementation of the Egyptian reform programme supported by the IMF. Restoring macroeconomic stability and fostering sustainable economic growth while at the same time mitigating the social impact of the reforms are all key priorities.

The Association Council commended Egypt's significant efforts to stop the flux of illegal migration since September 2016 as well as the burden of hosting more than 5 million refugees, including over 500.000 Syrian refugees, in addition to combating trafficking and smuggling of human beings and the implementation of the Valletta Action Plan and the Khartoum process. The EU and Egypt look forward to further strengthening their cooperation on migration, as part of the broader EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities. The EU-Egypt Migration Dialogue is one of the tools to address all aspects of a comprehensive cooperation on migration.

The EU and Egypt remain committed to combating terrorism, which poses a major threat to the security and well-being of our citizens across both sides of the Mediterranean.

Combating this threat represents a common goal of the EU and Egypt; they can cooperate through a comprehensive approach that will address the root causes of terrorism with due respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in order to enable both sides to successfully counter and prevent radicalisation and enhance socio-economic development. The EU and Egypt remain committed to cooperating in fighting extremism and any form of discrimination, including Islamophobia and xenophobia.

The Association Council provided an opportunity to identify specific areas where the EU and Egypt could enhance cooperation. In this regard, the EU and Egypt expressed their commitment to continue to cooperate in diversification of energy sources, with a particular focus on renewable energy sources, energy efficiency actions, energy governance as well as the establishment of a regional energy hub in Egypt. The strengthened energy dialogue between the EU and Egypt contributes to the joint

research, sharing experience and best practice, technology transfers, as well as sub-regional cooperation.

The Association Council reaffirmed the commitment undertaken by both sides, faced with the common challenge of climate change, through ratification of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The EU reiterated its willingness to support Egypt to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Egypt and the EU highlighted their interest in intensifying cooperation in the field of research and innovation, including through the participation of Egypt in the Partnership on Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA), as well as Horizon-2020 projects and programs. Research and innovation has a key role in tackling issues of shared concern in the Mediterranean area. PRIMA is expected to mobilise joint research and innovation in two fields of strategic importance for the Mediterranean area: water provision and food production. The Association Council also noted the importance of student, staff and researcher exchanges and welcomed Egypt's active participation in EU programmes such as Erasmus+.

Egypt and the EU expressed their commitment to enhancing democracy, fundamental freedoms and human rights as constitutional rights of all their citizens in line with their international obligations, and agreed that human rights are a common value and constitute a cornerstone of a democratic, stable and prosperous state.

The EU and Egypt agreed that civil society is an important and potent contributor to the implementation of their Partnership Priorities and to transparent, participatory governance and can support the sustainable development process underway in Egypt. They will work with civil society in contributing effectively in the economic, political and social development process in compliance with the Egyptian Constitution and national legislation.

The EU and Egypt have a shared interest in reinforcing cooperation in foreign policy at the bilateral, regional and international levels. In line with the Partnership Priorities, Egypt and the EU expressed their continued readiness for greater cooperation and a common understanding of a range of issues, including in the multilateral sphere. The Association Council noted the importance of the partnership between the EU and Egypt for the stability and prosperity of the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa. Further cooperation between the EU and Egypt, including within regional fora, will aim to contribute to the resolution of conflicts, to building peace and to tackling political and economic challenges in these regions.

The EU and Egypt committed to further reinforcing bilateral consultations on issues related the Middle East Peace Process, Syria, Libya, African matters and other major regional and international challenges that affect both sides.

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