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#### NOTE

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Relations with Egypt - European Union's position for the Association Council's 9th meeting (Luxembourg, 19 June 2022)

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Delegations will find attached the European Union's position for the 9th EU-Egypt Association Council.

## 9<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE EU-EGYPT ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

(Luxembourg, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2022)

### Statement by the European Union

1. The European Union welcomes the ninth meeting of the EU-Egypt Association Council. The EU-Egypt Association Agreement that entered into force in 2004 forms the basis of the partnership and cooperation between the EU and Egypt. The EU welcomes the new EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities (2021-2027) adopted by the ninth EU-Egypt Association Council as an important political milestone in the bilateral relations. The Partnership Priorities restate the joint aim to address common challenges facing the EU and Egypt, promote joint interests and guarantee long-term stability and sustainable development on both sides of the Mediterranean. The shared commitment to the universal values of democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights continues to underpin the Partnership Priorities.
2. The new Partnership Priorities reflect the shared commitment of Egypt and the EU to reinforce cooperation in support of Egypt's 'Sustainable Development Strategy Vision 2030' and the EU's determination to renew and strengthen the partnership with its Southern Neighbourhood. Namely, in the European Council Conclusions of 10-11 December 2020<sup>1</sup> the EU stated its strategic priority for a democratic, more stable, greener and more prosperous Southern Neighbourhood. The EU Agenda for the Mediterranean<sup>2</sup> and its Economic and Investment Plan for the Southern Neighbours<sup>3</sup> set out in the EU Joint Communication on the Southern Neighbourhood of 9 February 2021 present the EU's objectives to achieve long-term, sustainable socioeconomic recovery and resilience following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region and to advance the twin green and digital transitions. The Council affirmed these goals in its Conclusions on a renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood of 19 April 2021<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/47296/1011-12-20-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> JOIN(2021) 2 final

<sup>3</sup> SWD(2021) 23 final

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news\\_corner/news/new-agenda-mediterranean-council-approves-conclusions-renewed-partnership-southern\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news_corner/news/new-agenda-mediterranean-council-approves-conclusions-renewed-partnership-southern_en)

3. The EU attaches great importance to its relationship with Egypt as a key partner and regional player and underlines the strategic nature and potential of the partnership. Engagement and numerous bilateral visits, including at the highest political level, illustrate the political commitment to advance this partnership.
4. Following the last **EU-Egypt Association Council** in 2018, all subcommittees under the thematic clusters identified in the Partnership Priorities (economy, political, stability) were held during 2019. Macroeconomic Dialogues took place in July 2018 in Brussels and in September 2019 in Cairo, followed by a virtual Macroeconomic Dialogue in November 2020. The second Senior Officials Migration Dialogue took place in July 2019. Once the resumption of physical meetings became possible in the autumn of 2021, the seventh EU-Egypt Association Committee, the third Senior Officials Migration Dialogue and the first-ever High-Level Political Dialogue were held in Cairo.
5. The 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) over the past ten years exceeds EUR 11 billion. The EU supports Egypt through a mix of cooperation instruments – bilateral, regional and global – with an ongoing bilateral cooperation portfolio of some EUR 1.3 billion. Since 2008, Egypt has been a leading beneficiary of blending operations with over EUR 620 million in blending grants leveraging some EUR 7 billion in concessional loans from European Financial Institutions for investments in the key sectors of renewable energy, energy efficiency, water and wastewater management, public transport, financial inclusion, support to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, urban development and technical vocational education and training. Egypt is likely to continue this trend under the enhanced European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+), expected to mobilise public and private investments of some EUR 30 billion in the Southern Neighbourhood region. The Economic and Investment Plan seeks to mobilise EUR 1 billion between 2021 and 2027, expected to leverage nearly EUR 9 billion of additional investments in Egypt. Under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), an amount of EUR 240 million has been allocated to Egypt for the bilateral portfolio for the period 2021-2024.

***Egypt's Sustainable Modern Economy and Social Development, including cooperation on Climate and Energy***

6. The EU and Egypt will cooperate in advancing socio-economic goals set out in Egypt's "Sustainable Development Strategy – Vision 2030" with a view to strengthening Egypt's ability to withstand and recover quickly from economic shocks, build prosperity and realise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The COVID-19 pandemic challenged the national healthcare systems and had a severe impact on the economy and society. The recovery from the pandemic has however been overtaken by the economic impact of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine necessitating further exceptional monetary and fiscal measures and socio-economic support. The EU and Egypt will cooperate closely on long-term socio-economic recovery built around green and sustainable development, human development, economic resilience and prosperity building through the green and digital transitions, support to social cohesion, and the development of a modern and democratic state. It will be primarily supported by the speedy and efficient implementation of the flagship initiatives of the Economic and Investment Plan of the New Agenda for the Mediterranean. Team Europe initiatives designed in conjunction with EU Member States and European Financing Institutions will also be used for the implementation of EU assistance.
7. The EU commends Egypt's handling of the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis, which saw quarterly real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rates recovering steadily since the initial shock. The EU acknowledges the decisive economic measures taken to address the economic impact of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine. Strong, sustainable and inclusive growth will require continued structural reforms and prudent fiscal policy to contain public debt. The EU welcomes the continued public finance management (PFM) reform, which it will further support through the Public Finance Management reform programme signed at the end of 2021.
8. The Egyptian Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency (MSMEDA) adopted its long-term strategy in November 2018. The development of this sector plays a central role in EU cooperation with Egypt with a number of projects including 'Support to Implementation of Strategies to Foster Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development in Egypt' (MiSMESIS) and access to finance and innovation programmes implemented through a number of European Financial Institutions (EFIs) to facilitate Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) access to finance and upgrade competitiveness of value chains, thus enhancing trade prospects.
9. The EU remains Egypt's first trading partner in terms of both imports and exports and the biggest investor in Egypt. We are committed to working with Egypt on modernising bilateral trade and investment relations by ensuring that the trade and competition provisions of the EU-

Egypt Association Agreement are respected in full, and the Agreement implemented in a manner that enables it to reach its full potential. As an important contribution to this common cause, the EU looks forward to continuing the constructive EU-Egypt trade dialogue on preventing and abolishing measures potentially affecting bilateral trade and to Egypt's removal of current trade barriers, such as Egypt's requirement of a mandatory registration of European companies wishing to export to Egypt. The EU stands ready to reinforce the EU's partnership with Egypt with a view to tackling common challenges in a fast changing geopolitical context and taking advantage of shared opportunities through strengthened cooperation.

10. The EU continues to support Egypt in increasing its trade and investment opportunities, including through the implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan. Competitiveness has been and will continue to be enhanced through work on the regulatory framework, the compliance of products with internationally agreed standards including sanitary and phytosanitary standards, market transparency, and innovation including the promotion of sustainable production and the development of industrial policies and strategies. The EU also supports Egypt in trade facilitation with assistance to the Egyptian Customs Authority and to the development of Intellectual Property Rights (patents, trademarks and industrial design).
11. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the vulnerability of many households in a context where almost a third of the country's population already lives below the poverty line. The EUR 27 million EU programme in support of Egypt's National Population Strategy aims to increase the use of voluntary, rights-based family planning. In addition to the high population growth rate and density, Egypt is also facing unprecedented urban expansion. The EU, through co-financing with European Financing Institutions, has played a key role in tackling social inclusion and integration of residents in less advantaged urban areas through the provision of basic socio-economic services and infrastructure. With more than 70% of poor people concentrated in rural areas where agriculture is the main source of income, the EU has provided extensive support for the promotion of sustainable rural development, which will continue through a new EUR 27 million integrated rural development programme shortly to commence implementation. The EU stands ready to work with Egypt in the pursuit of comprehensive and sustainable social protection schemes. The EU will continue to support and contribute to Egypt's efforts to address the social-economic impact of the ongoing crises, particularly on the most vulnerable, through support for the provision of basic services and social protection measures as well as the Decent Life Initiative of the Government (Haya Karima).

12. The adoption of the by-laws of the Universal Health Insurance Law in June 2018 reflects a renewed effort to improve funding and access to the public healthcare system. The EU stands ready to support the government in the establishment of a universal healthcare system for the entire population over the next 15 years. In July 2020 the European Commission adopted a COVID-19-sanitary crisis response programme through which EUR 89 million have been made available to help ease the strain on the health system. In addition the EU has been a key supporter of the COVAX facility to accelerate the development and production of COVID-19 vaccines and to ensure equitable access to such vaccines for all countries across the world including Egypt. The EU and its Member States, under a Team Europe approach, have already shared/delivered (or are about to deliver) to Egypt around 29 million doses. The EU stands ready to support Egypt to further its own capacity to manufacture vaccines.
13. Advancing on an ambitious green transition agenda is more urgent than ever. The latest science as well as the new geopolitical and energy market reality require an acceleration of the green energy transition and development of a resource-efficient, socially just, resilient, sustainable and climate neutral economy. Full implementation of the Paris Agreement and delivering on the commitments made at COP26, working in partnership towards the COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh and the COP28 in the United Arab Emirates, will be crucial to address the climate emergency including the need for a resolute and just worldwide transformation towards climate neutrality by mid-century, including phasing out of unabated coal. Egypt, as President of COP 27, has a strategic role to play in driving a just and inclusive green transition required to limit global warming to 1.5°C as set down in the Paris Agreement. The EU will do its utmost to support the work of the Egyptian COP27 Presidency towards an ambitious outcome. COP27 provides an opportunity for Egypt to set out its own ambition for the future and its timetable towards a net-zero economy. Through its leadership Egypt can inspire a real change and set an example of ambitious green transition pathway. Hence, the importance of upgrading the current Nationally Determined Contributions, which we invite Egypt to submit ahead of COP27, and which could represent an important blueprint for engagement and support by partners like the EU. The EU and Egypt share focus on the importance of achieving the Global Goal on adaptation for the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement. The EU welcomes the launch of the two-year Glasgow – Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation. The EU will actively contribute to its implementation with a view to improving adaptation action and contributing to sustainable development.

14. The EU attaches great importance to cooperation with Egypt in the energy sector on common priorities such as energy security and energy transition with the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2018 as the basis for cooperation in areas such as renewable energy, electricity sector reforms, energy efficiency, and energy research and technologies, and promotion of investment. The EU has provided extensive support to the sector and is supporting Egypt in updating its integrated energy strategy so as to meet the country's sustainable development requirements while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The EU is committed to deepen energy cooperation, including through new and sustained investments in the electricity grids, interconnections, and trilateral cooperation. Renewable hydrogen production is an area of particular joint interest and where there is great potential in working together. The EU status as observer in the East Mediterranean Gas Forum is a positive development. The EU is committed to supporting the work of the forum and contributing to a forward-looking long-term strategy that will embrace a clean, safe and sustainable energy transition. In this regard, reducing fugitive methane emissions is key to mitigate climate change and as such Egypt is invited to support the Global Methane Pledge. In addition, the EU sees the opportunity to further strengthen energy cooperation with Egypt in the field of renewables and to increase the production and export of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and potential hydrogen partnerships while preserving Egypt's own green transition.
15. The EU has seen many positive signs of climate related policy developments in Egypt, which demonstrates a growing interest in green growth and sustainable energy transition. It will be essential that this transcends all sectors so as to ensure a sustainable and resource efficient economy. The European Green Deal offers significant opportunities to work together to accelerate the green transition and sustainable investments. The EU will support Egypt in promoting sustainable finance and environmental sustainability standards in its domestic investment portfolio.
16. On biodiversity, the EU welcomes the important part Egypt has played as the CBD COP President and will continue providing support to creating synergies between the Conventions. In the lead up to CBD COP15 the EU looks forward to continuing cooperation with Egypt to achieve an ambitious and transformative post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).
17. The EU has provided extensive support to Egypt on mitigation and adaptation related topics including water resource management, development of sustainable agriculture, expanding public transport networks, the roll out of renewable energy, promotion of energy efficiency and pollution abatement. Support to these sectors will continue in the future along with other areas



of common interest such as biodiversity conservation, combating desertification and land degradation, disaster risk reduction (Sendai Framework), sanitation and solid waste management including industrial pollutants, chemicals and hazard waste management. Egypt also participates in regional projects on the environment and climate, including CLIMA MED (supporting climate governance), Switch MED on sustainable production and consumption and the Water and Environment Support initiative. The EU is also ready for increased cooperation, consultations and exchange of experience in crisis management and prevention, reinforcing cooperation on civil protection and disaster risk management.

18. The EU has led the development of a Team Europe Initiative on Climate Change Adaptation through Integrated Water & Food Security, which brings together the EU and all EU Financial Institutions (EUFIs) and EU Member states active in Egypt to support Egypt in addressing the main challenge faced by agriculture - water productivity and scarcity, while also adapting to climate change, improving environmental protection and strengthening rural communities. As a sign of its commitment to regional cooperation on the issues, Egypt hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial meeting on the environment and climate action in October 2021. Opportunities under the (UfM) regarding cooperation on climate, environment and sustainable blue economy<sup>5</sup> will continue to be explored.
19. In the field of transport, the EU continued to support the upgrade and extension of public transport systems in Cairo and Alexandria as well as the promotion of transport standards and an integrated multimodal network for a sustainable, secure, safe, efficient and connected transport system. Egypt cooperated with EuroMed regional projects and in particular with the European transport agencies under the Regional Transport Action Plan (RTAP) for the Mediterranean region. Within the Union for the Mediterranean Egypt was also involved in the development of a Trans-Mediterranean Transport Network and its connection to the European Transport Network (TEN-T).
20. The EU welcomes Egypt's progress towards achieving Education for All, the expansion of access to basic education and the closing of the gender gap in enrolment. The EU remains committed to the development of the Egyptian education sector, particularly for the most vulnerable, and has developed a comprehensive approach to combatting child labour through educational and livelihood services as well as strengthening child protection systems. The EU is

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<sup>5</sup> In line with the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Declaration-UfM-Blue-Economy-EN-1.pdf>



providing extensive support to the modernisation and quality of education, and particularly Technical and Vocational Education and Training and Egyptian Higher Education, so as to better align skills to labour market demand as well as a programme to provide high-quality and practice-oriented technical schools in the energy sector.

21. In addition to the EU's substantial bilateral support in this sector, Egypt also participates in EU programmes to promote international cooperation among students and higher education institutions. In 2019 and 2020, Erasmus+, the EU's flagship programme for Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE), selected 15 projects between European and Egyptian universities worth more than EUR 14 million. On International Credit Mobility, in 2019 and 2020, Erasmus+ assigned close to 1,500 mobility grants for Egyptian higher education and staff to Europe, as well as close to 900 grants for European students and staff to travel to Egypt, with an overall grant allocation for mobility with Egypt of EUR 8.5 million. Egypt is encouraged to take greater advantage of the opportunities offered by Erasmus+ and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions for the training and mobility of researchers.
22. The EU attaches significant importance to reliable, comparable and professionally independent statistics as the basis for evidence-based policy-making and for monitoring the impact of policies implemented. The EU invites Egypt to continue its efforts to produce statistics in line with international and European norms and standards and welcomes Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) continued interest in statistical cooperation with the EU, including in the statistical cooperation programme MEDSTAT V for the Southern Neighbourhood.
23. In line with the objectives of the new EU Global Approach Communication for Research and Innovation adopted in May 2021, the EU will work with Egypt to promote science and evidence-based policymaking to deliver innovative solutions to make our societies green, digital and healthy. The 8th EU-Egypt Joint Science and Technology Cooperation committee took place on 25 November 2021 allowing for the exchange of information on recent research and innovation policy developments in both Egypt and the EU and identified energy, water, agro-food and health as priority sectors for cooperation. The EU looks forward to further cooperating with Egypt in research and innovation and in advancing digital technologies, including artificial intelligence and cybersecurity while protecting the right to privacy.

24. The EU welcomes Egypt's active participation in the Horizon 2020 framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and PRIMA (Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area) as well as other programmes in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) so as to support scientific research and innovation for the sustainable management of water and food systems. The EU welcomes Egypt's interest in being associated to Horizon Europe as expressed during the 7<sup>th</sup> EU-Egypt Association Committee. The approval of the Framework Protocol for the participation of Egypt in EU programmes is expected to open the way for the participation of Egypt in other EU programmes such as Horizon Europe.
25. The EU appreciates the close cooperation with Egypt in both the policy dialogue with the African Union and the Union for the Mediterranean including the adoption of the Research and Innovation Roadmaps in the priority areas of Climate Change, Health, and Renewable Energies. The EU looks forward to the continued engagement of Egypt for the implementation of the Research and Innovation priorities agreed in the context of both policy dialogue platforms particularly in view of the UfM Research and Innovation Ministerial in June 2022, as well as continued work with the Joint Research Centre on the topic of Technology Transfer.

### ***Partners in Foreign Policy***

26. The EU condemns Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, grossly violating international law and the principles of the UN Charter and undermining global security and stability. The war is inflicting unspeakable suffering on the Ukrainian population. The EU stands firmly and unwaveringly by Ukraine and its people, in times of strong concerns over civilian casualties and the human rights implications of Russia's actions. In this regard, the EU appreciates Egypt's vote in favour of the UN General Assembly resolutions of 2 March 2022<sup>6</sup> and 24 March 2022<sup>7</sup> demanding that Russia immediately end its military aggression against Ukraine, and calling for civilian protection and humanitarian access in Ukraine. The EU emphasizes the joint interest in further condemning Russia's clear violation of and contempt for international law. The EU relies also on Egypt's assistance to prevent the circumvention of EU measures adopted in response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution GA/12407 of 02/03/2022

<sup>7</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution GA/12411 of 24/03/2022

27. The EU is concerned by Russian state-sponsored disinformation and massive information manipulation used to justify and support its military aggression against Ukraine as well as undermine the EU's position on this issue, targeting the societies of the EU and neighbouring countries, gravely distorting and manipulating the facts. It is of major concern that pro-Kremlin false narratives are being spread intensively in the media and social networks in Arabic language across the MENA region, including Egypt. The EU stands ready to share with Egypt and all partners its practices and expertise in countering pro-Kremlin disinformation.
28. Confronted with the shortfall of wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine and increasing oil prices, Egypt is facing severe challenges. The EU is concerned about food security in Egypt being the world's biggest importer of wheat and having heavily relied on wheat imports from Ukraine and Russia. The EU stands ready to support Egypt with EUR 100 million from the regional "Food and Resilience Facility" to address the consequences of rising prices of food and commodities. The EU encourages Egypt to avoid export restrictions on agricultural goods and the EU will seek convergence on how to meet the food security challenges in the World Trade Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, G7, G20 and other international fora.
29. The partnership between the EU and Egypt is important for the stability and prosperity of the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa. Given the strategic orientation of the partnership, the EU is committed to reinforcing cooperation with Egypt in foreign policy at the bilateral, regional and international organisations levels, notably in the UN and multilateral fora, as well as with the League of Arab States (LAS), the African Union and the Union for the Mediterranean. Egypt hosts the headquarters of the LAS, with which the EU will continue to deepen and broaden cooperation. The EU is looking forward to holding in Cairo the EU-LAS Ministerial and it commends the constructive role Egypt has been playing in the LAS. In this context, the EU reiterates that now is neither the time to normalise relations with Syria nor to reintegrate Syria into international bodies and that only a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 2254 would open the way for such a reintegration, and underlines the importance of maintaining pressure on the Assad regime.
30. Following the **sixth European Union - African Union summit** in February 2022, the EU is looking forward to continuing its partnership with Egypt as key actor within the African Union and to jointly implementing the renewed partnership **for solidarity, security, peace and**

**sustainable and sustained economic development and prosperity** as outlined in the EU-African Union **Joint Vision for 2030**. **The EU acknowledges** Egypt's leading role within the African Union in particular in our common fight against climate change and joint efforts towards a green energy transition as Egypt will host COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh in November 2022.

31. Within the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the EU and Egypt are partners committed to enhance cooperation and dialogue in the interest of peace, stability, development, and shared prosperity for a strengthened Euro-Mediterranean region. The EU underlines the joint interest to address common challenges in view of a more peaceful, secure, green, prosperous and inclusive Mediterranean region.
32. The EU recognises Egypt's indispensable role in the Middle East Peace Process and will continue to engage closely with Egypt in pursuing a just, sustainable and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The EU remains firm in its commitment to a negotiated and viable two-state solution built upon the internationally agreed parameters and international law. The EU underlines the urgent need for engagement to restore a political horizon and open the path towards the relaunch of the peace process as soon as possible. The EU continues to urge both parties to demonstrate their stated commitment to a two state solution through concrete actions and to avoid unilateral actions that threaten it. The EU appreciates Egypt's important role for the stabilization and reconstruction of Gaza, and continuous efforts towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation, and remains committed to step up EU engagement on recovery of Gaza. The EU has taken positive note of the increased regional engagement including the first-ever convening of the Egyptian, Israeli and UAE leadership in Sharm El-Sheikh as well as the Negev Summit, with the participation of Egypt, in March 2022.
33. The EU and Egypt share a common interest in promoting stability and prosperity in Libya. The EU reaffirms the importance of a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process under UN auspices.
34. In light of the significance of the Nile as a source of livelihood, the EU is conscious of the importance and urgency that Egypt places in finding as soon as possible an agreement on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). The EU has welcomed the UN Security Council

Presidential Statement on the GERD issued on 15 September 2021<sup>8</sup>. The EU continues to strongly encourage a mutually agreed solution between all parties on the filling and operation of the GERD. The EU stands ready to support African Union-led talks and to play a more active role, if useful and desirable to all parties, by putting forward its rich experience in the management of shared water resources in line with international law. Reaching a mutually acceptable, lasting international agreement as soon as possible is crucial for the water security, economic development and peace and stability of the region. With political will and support from the international community, this dispute could be turned into an opportunity for many people. Millions of people who live in the Nile Basin stand to benefit from an agreement on the GERD which would create predictability, and open the door for foreign investments in energy, food security and water security.

### ***Rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms***

35. In line with the Partnership Priorities, both sides are committed to ensuring accountability, the rule of law, the full respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms, promoting democracy, gender equality and equal opportunities as constitutional rights of all their citizens. These commitments contribute to the advancement of the partnership and to Egypt's sustainable development and stability. The increased and constructive engagement between the EU and Egypt in the last period has opened the path to more meaningful dialogue on human rights related issues. The subcommittee on Political Matters, Human Rights and Democracy, International and Regional issues of June 2019 and the Association Committee of October 2021 provided the institutional platforms to exchange on an array of human rights issues, which the EU would like to continue and build on.
36. The EU has welcomed the publication of the first-ever National Human Rights Strategy as a manifestation of Egypt's commitment at the highest level to meaningfully address human rights issues in line with Egypt's constitution and international commitments. We strongly encourage the prompt and effective implementation of the strategy together with civil society in an effort to improve, inter alia, the respect and protection of fundamental freedoms. Stemming from our own experience in implementing the EU Action Plan for Human Rights, the EU stands ready to work with the Government of Egypt in translating its national strategic document into practice.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/254/83/PDF/N2125483.pdf?OpenElement>

37. The EU welcomes the visit of the EU Special Representative for Human Rights to Egypt in April 2022<sup>9</sup> as a manifestation of the strengthened engagement on human rights. The EU Special Representative held comprehensive discussions with the Egyptian counterparts focusing on the effective implementation of Egypt's National Human Rights Strategy such as the strategy's provisions addressing detention conditions, alternatives to pre-trial detention and reforms related to the death penalty. The application of the NGO law and its bylaws was also discussed and the EU Special Representative received assurances that the case 173 had been closed and that consequential travel bans and asset freezes were being lifted.
38. The EU places great importance on the joint promotion of gender equality and recognises Egypt's commitment to strengthen women's empowerment. The EU has been working with Egypt, notably the National Council for Women and civil society, to reinforce women's empowerment and women's full enjoyment of human rights. The EU's work with Egypt focuses on women's participation in public life through the Citizens' Rights project, women's economic empowerment, addressing sexual and gender based violence and has contributed to the national campaign against female genital mutilation.
39. The EU notes the national efforts to promote freedom of religion or belief in Egypt and encourages the elimination of all forms of discrimination on such grounds and protection of individuals from sectarian attacks. The EU commends the Government of Egypt's efforts together with religious institutions to combat extremism and prevent radicalization. As discussed between President Michel and President Al-Sisi in November 2020<sup>10</sup>, it is important to join forces in promoting dialogue and mutual understanding.
40. The EU remains concerned about restrictions to civil society space and pressure against human rights defenders in Egypt as well as restrictions on upholding online and offline freedom of expression, media freedom, academic freedom and the right to peaceful assembly and association. The EU notes positively a number of releases and the reactivation of the Presidential Pardon Committee. The EU reiterates its call to release remaining detained human rights defenders and journalists, investigate cases of enforced disappearance and torture and all

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/egypt/eu-special-representative-human-rights-mission-egypt-11-13-april-2022\\_en?s=95](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/egypt/eu-special-representative-human-rights-mission-egypt-11-13-april-2022_en?s=95)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/11/05/press-release-following-the-meeting-between-president-charles-michel-and-president-abdel-fattah-al-sisi-of-egypt/>

allegations of human rights violations and abuses, including incidents of violence by security forces, and bring perpetrators to justice. The EU reiterates its call to shed light on the circumstances of the death of Giulio Regeni and Eric Lang and bring about justice. Fully respecting the independence of the judiciary, the EU underlines the importance of access for trial observation.

41. Following the reform of the NGO law in 2019 and the adoption of the bylaws in early 2021, the EU underlines the importance of this legislation for the civil society's contribution to implement the Partnership Priorities. This law directly affects the EU's cooperation assistance to Egypt as a large part of EU and Member States' cooperation relies on civil society organisations as important implementing partners. The EU stands ready to work with Egypt on the implementation of this law to institutionalize an enabling environment for civil society as well as a meaningful social dialogue and allow organisations, including organisations that focus on human rights matters, to work without undue restrictions.
42. The increase in the use of the capital punishment in recent years in Egypt - despite the global trend to abandon this inhumane punishment - goes against the EU's principled position to abolish the death penalty. The National Human Rights Strategy foresees the review of crimes punishable by the death penalty. In view of this, the EU calls on Egypt to suspend executions as a first step and to establish a formal moratorium with a view to its abolition.
43. The EU supports Egypt's commitments to enhance state institutions' accountability, efficiency, independence and transparency. The EU has contributed to Egypt's efforts to reform the public administration, notably on improving public finance management and fight against corruption. We stand ready to further support Egypt in effective public sector reform and modernization of its justice sector in line with international standards to ensure access to justice and fair trials for all citizens. In this regard and as per the Partnership Priorities, both sides could consider developing cooperation with the European Anti-Fraud Office and with EU law enforcement agencies such as Eurojust and the European Public Prosecutor's Office.

### ***Cooperation on Counter Terrorism***

44. The EU recognizes Egypt's key role for regional security and stability. Terrorism is a common threat against our security and the social fabric of nations across both sides of the Mediterranean. Therefore, the EU and Egypt have a common interest in strengthening



cooperation on security and countering terrorism in the areas highlighted in the Partnership Priorities, in full compliance with international law, including human rights and international humanitarian law.

45. The EU places great importance on taking multilateral action to counter terrorism. The EU and Egypt's successful bid to co-chair the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF) confirms this approach. At the GCTF, the EU will work with Egypt in line with our values and principles building on the work of the current co-chairs Canada and Morocco. This initiative builds on the EU's previous cooperation with Egypt as Co-Chairs of the East Africa Capacity Building Working Group in the GCTF over the last four years. The EU's partnership with Egypt in this context was successful and brought about concrete results, such as addressing the importance of dialogue and community resilience when countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. The EU is committed to working with Egypt and GCTF Members in order to implement a comprehensive and global approach that addresses the root causes of terrorism, with respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in order to successfully counter and prevent radicalisation and foster socio-economic development. Collaborating on the multilateral level with Egypt could lead to reinforcing also the bilateral cooperation.

### *Cooperation on Migration*

46. The EU and Egypt have a strong, strategic and comprehensive cooperation on migration as highlighted in the Partnership Priorities and reaffirmed during the visits of Commissioners Johansson and Várhelyi to Cairo and the third Senior Officials Migration Dialogue in November 2021. The European Council Conclusions of October 2021<sup>11</sup> reiterated its expectation that the financing for Syrian refugees and host communities, inter alia in Egypt under relevant instruments will be mobilised in a timely manner.
47. Egypt benefits from the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) with EUR 90 million in bilateral and regional actions, with a focus on addressing root causes of irregular migration through job creation. Egypt is also a beneficiary of a number of EU regional migration programmes addressing different aspects of migration including voluntary return and reintegration, legal migration and labour mobility in line with Member States' competences, supporting the most

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/10/22/european-council-conclusions-21-22-october-2021/>

vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic, child protection, fighting smuggling of migrants and trafficking of human beings and border management. The EU humanitarian assistance of EUR 5 million per year targets the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers through a ‘one refugee approach’, aiming to reach both Syrians and other nationalities based on vulnerabilities and needs, and not through earmarked funding by nationality. The EU will continue supporting initiatives in Egypt aiming at fostering inclusion of refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants into the existing social protection systems and enhance their access to essential services, such as health and education.

48. The EU acknowledges Egypt’s effective management of its borders, and welcomes the positive results delivered in the handling of irregular migratory flows and in hosting a large number of refugees. The EU will continue to support and build on Egypt’s efforts in these areas, notably when it comes to the delivery of basic services to migrants and refugees, border management, the fight against smuggling and trafficking, and return and reintegration. In line with Egypt’s request, the EU will step up its engagement and financial assistance in the field of border management. The EU and Egypt will continue to strengthen cooperation also on other aspects of migration and mobility, including legal migration, in line with EU and national competences. Egypt is also currently part of the ambitious programme Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa (THAMM), funded under the EU Trust Fund for Africa and aiming at promoting legal migration and mobility between North Africa and Europe in line with Member States’ competences and within the North of Africa. The EU will continue to support the Egyptian government's efforts to reform its asylum framework, including respective legislation, and to that effect welcomes the ongoing work with the European Asylum Agency. The EU encourages strengthening operational cooperation also with other agencies such as Frontex and CEPOL, as well as the strategic partnership with the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCCPA) on the regional dimension.

### ***Principles of Cooperation***

49. The EU looks forward to crystalizing the current positive momentum of the partnership and mark real progress in the interest of both sides. The EU-Egypt partnership will benefit from further deepening our political dialogue in a spirit of mutual trust and openness. The role of civil society, youth and women, as well as the private sector in the implementation of the Partnership Priorities is crucial. Regular engagement regarding the progress made in the implementation of

the Partnership Priorities, through the various mechanisms foreseen in Association Agreement and through regular political dialogue, will allow us to continue to maintain this positive momentum, in the interest of our people and regions.

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