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**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations  
Subject: Ministerial Conference to counter migrant smuggling

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Following the Ministerial Conference to counter migrant smuggling hosted by Italy on 13 July 2020, delegations will find in Annex a press statement by the EU participants in the conference.

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Press Statement

**Ministerial Conference to counter migrant smuggling**

13 July 2020

The Ministers of Interior of France, Germany, Italy, Malta and Spain, and the European Commissioners for Home Affairs and for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, met today their counterparts from Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia to strengthen their mutual engagement in preventing and combatting migrant smuggling. Italy hosted this conference; Germany participated in its capacity as President of the Council.

The participants underlined that reducing human suffering, the fight against the exploitation of vulnerable people and the loss of lives at sea and on land remained their joint moral imperative and a common challenge for them all. They expressed a clear commitment to preventing and combating migrant smuggling in a joint and coordinated manner, as part of their comprehensive and balanced approach to migration management. They expressed continued strong support for their law enforcement and border management authorities' efforts to save lives at sea and on land, to dismantle the criminal organisations involved in migrant smuggling and to enhance social and economic resilience to this serious crime.

The participants committed to building on the significant efforts made by all actors to combat migrant smuggling and underlined their commitment to further pursuing dialogues with African Partners to identify future avenues of cooperation in countering smuggling with a coherent approach.

The participants resolved to make use of all available tools, including Common Operational Partnerships as part of their work towards bilateral Partnerships to Counter Migrant Smuggling, to enhance their collective capacity to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute migrant smuggling networks. They emphasised that they would promote closer cooperation to this end between AFRIPOL and EU agencies, including FRONTEX and EUROPOL, and the European Network of Immigration Liaison Officers.

The participants agreed upon the need to enhance law enforcement cooperation among all parties through projects of police training, operational capacities and financial support for technical equipment in order to strengthen their operational capabilities in the fight against migrant smuggling network and transnational crime. Already existing practice in this field have shown positive results in the joint endeavour of fighting against migrant smuggling and must be pursued.

The participants also underlined the importance of awareness raising among prospective migrants in order to counter smugglers' narratives. They also reiterated their commitment to curb the initiative of migrant smuggling networks, particularly in view of the systematic abuse and exploitation inherent to migrant smuggling.

The participants recalled the importance of all EU Member States support for anti-smuggling efforts.