



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1049 Vienna, 30 April 2015

EU statement on Migration in the Mediterranean

Last week, the European Council convened a special meeting to discuss the dramatic situation in the Mediterranean at the highest political level. The heads of states and government agreed that saving people's lives is the number one priority. At the same time trafficking in human beings and irregular migration need to be addressed and smugglers need to be stopped. The European Union will mobilise all efforts at its disposal to prevent further loss of life at sea and to tackle the root causes of the human emergency that we face, in cooperation with the countries of origin and transit.

The European leaders have agreed on four priorities for action. First, our presence at sea will be strengthened. EU operations Triton and Poseidon will be reinforced by at least tripling the financial resources for 2015 and 2016, thereby increasing search and rescue possibilities within the mandate of FRONTEX.

Second, the European Union is committed to fighting traffickers in accordance with international law by disrupting trafficking networks, bringing the perpetrators to justice and seizing their assets. Swift action by EU agencies and Member States authorities will be complemented through increased intelligence and police-cooperation with third countries. We will also undertake systematic efforts to identify, capture and destroy vessels before they can be used by traffickers. The High Representative has begun preparations for a possible CSDP operation to this effect.

Third, we need to prevent illegal migration flows. We will increase cooperation with countries of transit and origin, especially the countries around Libya, and launch specific regional development and protection programmes for North Africa and the Horn of Africa. The European Union will further step up dialogue with the African Union at all levels on these issues.

Finally, we will reinforce our internal solidarity and responsibility. This will include among other measures a first voluntary pilot project on resettlement across the EU, offering places to persons qualifying for protection. While respecting the right to seek asylum, we will set up a new return programme for the rapid return of illegal migrants from frontline Member States, coordinated by FRONTEX.

Instability in Libya creates an ideal environment for the criminal activities of traffickers. We will actively support all UN-led efforts towards re-establishing government authority in Libya. We will also step up efforts to address conflict and instability as key push factors of migration, including in Syria.

The European Union will remain seized of the humanitarian emergency in the Mediterranean and will closely monitor the implementation of the actions outlined. Collective effort is required by all. Illegal migration is not just an EU problem, but is a problem which affects the entire OSCE region. We therefore call on all participating States to join our efforts in addressing this phenomenon.

We believe that in this context, the OSCE can play a role in combating this phenomenon in a cross-dimensional manner, through its human, security and economic dimensions. This was affirmed in the Ministerial Council Decision on migration in Ljubljana in 2005, and on migration management adopted in Athens in 2009. The OSCE is also a forum for dialogue between participating States and Partners for Co-operation which are also very much affected by migration issues, including their root causes.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ANDORRA and MONACO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.