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OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 21 September – 2 October 2015

EU Statement – Working Session 11

Mr./Madam. Chairperson,

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union and its Member States to report on the situation of refugees, displaced persons and victims of human trafficking within the OSCE Area, to which the European Union remains fully committed.

The uninterrupted flows of persons, both migrants and asylum seekers, including vulnerable groups such as women in vulnerable situations, children, elderly people and persons with disabilities, crossing the Mediterranean or other land borders seeking to enter Europe require a coherent and comprehensive approach to respond to the new and multiple challenges.

Despite all efforts and the immediate actions taken by the European Union to prevent further losses of migrants' lives, its external borders have increasingly been the scene of human tragedies as the one occurred off the Libyan coasts on April 18th where a fishing boat capsized and an undefined number of migrants (from 700 to 950) disappeared in the Mediterranean Sea.

Following this terrible loss the European Council, in its extraordinary meeting on migration of April 23rd, decided inter alia to strengthening the European presence at sea, by providing additional support to Frontex joint-operations (Triton and Poseidon), thus allowing to increase the search and rescue activities and to better fight against smugglers and traffickers in human beings.



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The European Agenda on Migration – presented by the EU Commission on May, 13th – reaffirmed that “the immediate imperative is the duty to protect those in need” and highlighted the necessity to consider migratory movements as a structural phenomenon to be addressed as an opportunity for our societies. To this purpose, the Agenda offers a new strategic approach to better manage migration, focusing on short, medium and long term four priorities: 1) saving human lives and securing the external borders through solidarity towards the frontline Member States; 2) reducing the incentives for irregular migration, including through addressing root causes and combatting smuggling and human trafficking networks; 3) further implementing the common asylum policy based on shared responsibility; 4) developing a new policy on legal migration by facilitating entry and recognition of qualifications.

In line with the European Agenda on Migration, the European Council conclusions of 25-26 June 2015 highlighted the importance of adopting a well-balanced and geographically comprehensive approach to migration on the basis of a reinforced solidarity and responsibility among all Member States. To this aim, it was decided to focus on three key dimensions: resettlement/relocation, return/readmission/reintegration and cooperation with countries of origin and transit.

The European Union, fully aware of the current emergency situation, committed to help sixty thousand people: specifically through the resettlement of twenty thousand persons in clear need of international protection from those third countries most exposed to massive inflows of displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers; and through a temporary and exceptional mechanism of relocation of thirty two thousand persons in clear need of international protection from the frontline Member States, Italy and Greece, to other Member States.

In order to address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement and to sharply reduce the loss of human lives, the European Union will reinforce cooperation with the countries of origin and transit, including in the fight against



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smugglers and traffickers of human beings, and will step up investment in partner countries in areas such as resilience and security, human rights, good governance, and job creation. Development cooperation can also play an important role in helping partner countries in their efforts to improve migration governance and in this way ensure that migration takes place in an orderly, safe and regular manner.

The need for reinforced and expanded Regional Development Protection Programmes (RDPPs) in North Africa and the Horn of Africa has been confirmed by the European Council and it is included in the EU Agenda for Migration. The Task Force Mediterranean identified the need to address protection needs within current migration flows and ensure a more coordinated approach with development oriented actions. This approach has more recently been confirmed in other EU fora. Through the RDPPs the EU aims to enhance cooperation with and support partner countries that are marked by complex mixed migratory flows, ranging from hosting large numbers of refugees to dealing with internally displaced populations, migrants and returnees.

The implementation of the RDPPs goes in parallel with and is complementary to the efforts the European Union is carrying out in the framework of the Rabat and Khartoum process, whose aim is to engage third countries in a comprehensive and tangible cooperation setting focused on four main pillars: fight against irregular migration and the crimes linked to such a phenomenon; enhancement of on-site asylum capacities; promotion of legal migration channels; strengthening the link between migration and development.

The number of IDPs and refugees continues to increase across the OSCE area, primarily due to armed conflicts. Displacement can lead to chronic human rights abuses, and these people are often deprived from their most basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. We call upon participating states to uphold relevant international standards and OSCE commitments. The EU remains committed to



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provide humanitarian aid and development assistance to IDPs and refugees, and to tackle the root causes of displacement, in cooperation with the countries of origin and transit. Since the beginning of the crisis in and around Ukraine, the EU has provided financial support for both humanitarian and early recovery operations for a total amount of € 223 million. We also support the right of return for all refugees and IDPs under the condition that these returns to places of origin are informed, voluntary, non-discriminatory and conducted in safety and with dignity.

The EU recognizes trafficking in human beings as, first and foremost, a grave violation of human rights and a serious form of organized crime. As such, it is the only form of organized crime expressly prohibited in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Clearly addressing trafficking therefore means upholding fundamental rights. Trafficking constitutes a multi-billion-dollar business that flourishes in all parts of the world. Let me also recall that the European Union has built a comprehensive and far-seeing legal and policy framework, guided by the Anti-Trafficking Directive and the European Union Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016, and coordinated by the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator. Moreover, the European Union continues to promote globally higher standards in the fight against trafficking in human beings, including through regional dialogue processes such as the Khartoum Process with the countries along the East African migratory route.

Trafficking in human beings is always a gross human rights violation. More is needed to prevent, combat, identify and protect the victims of trafficking in human beings as well as to increase the prosecution of traffickers. Effective response require close coordination and cooperation among all actors of the societies. Human rights based and gender-sensitive approach is needed when combating the phenomenon.

Therefore, the European Union is engaged in better managing the current migratory flows with a specific regard to receive persons in clear need of protection on the basis of the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility among Member States,



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in line with the Helsinki Declaration 2015 and other resolutions adopted by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly at its 24th annual session.

Thank you for your attention

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

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