



Coordination meeting on the fight against smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons

### JOINT DECLARATION

The Ministers of the Interior and Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Germany, Guinea, Italy, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Spain, as well as the European Union, the United Nations, and the African Union Commission, the Secretariats of the G5 Sahel and CENSAD, met in Niamey on 16 March 2018, at the invitation of Niger holding the Presidency of the G5 Sahel, to improve the coordination of the fight against smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons between the States of origin, transit, and destination of migrants. The International Organization for Migration, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime attended the meeting.

2. Recalling that Niger, Chad, Libya, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain affirmed, in a joint declaration adopted in Paris on 28 August 2017, their willingness to fight against smuggling networks in order to limit irregular migration to Europe and to protect migrants against human rights abuses and the degrading conditions they suffer. To this end, they also agreed to strengthen their operational support for the efforts of countries of transit migration.

3. Stressing that these objectives were reaffirmed at the European Union-African Union Summit in Abidjan on 29 November 2017, which led to the adoption of a nine-point plan to strengthen cooperation between police and intelligence services to combat trafficking and smuggling networks and thus put an end to their activities, including financial channels and assets, and the crimes suffered by migrants.

4. Acknowledging the efforts to resettle identified and displaced refugees from Libya, in close cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, following the priorities of the EU, Germany, Spain, France, and Italy who had agreed to conduct protection missions in Niger and Chad, close consultation and agreement with their governments.

5. Building on the commitments made in the framework of the Valletta Joint Action Plan, the Rabat and Khartoum Processes, and the Malta Declaration and welcoming the results achieved in these frameworks;

6. Stressing the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to integrated migration management, including through the fair sharing of responsibilities between countries of origin, transit, and destination, and under their national capacities, in this case through the financing of investment projects, in particular in areas of origin and transit of migrants;

7. Recalling the commitment to pursue a coordinated approach to sustainable development to address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement in countries of origin;

8. Noting the efforts made by the various countries on the Central Mediterranean route, in particular by local communities in transit countries, to prosecute smugglers, prevent irregular migration, assist and repatriate stranded migrants and cooperate in the identification and protection of asylum seekers and refugees;

9. Highlighting the need to develop the conditions for an alternative economy to counter the black economy of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons by creating new sources of income to benefit communities affected by trafficking and/or more vulnerable to these crimes as transit countries.

10. Welcoming the efforts already made in the management and governance of migration by African countries, the EU and its Member States through the implementation of the Valletta Plan and national and regional migration policy dialogues.

11. Recalling the continued support offered by the EU and its Member States which has already made possible, *inter alia*, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the voluntary return and reintegration of 15 000 migrants and the evacuation of more than 1 000 refugees from Libya per the commitments made at the African Union-European Union Summit in Abidjan.

12. The participants agreed to undertake together with the following actions:

**1) Strengthen national legislative frameworks to fight against smuggling and trafficking in persons**

13. Continue to support the development of coherent national migration strategies to guarantee the rights of migrants and make it possible to prosecute all forms of crime associated with smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, to combat money laundering, and to seize criminal assets.

14. To promote, *inter alia*, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and in particular the ratification of its two Protocols, one to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, the other to combat the smuggling of migrants by land, air and sea.

15. To further facilitate the sharing of experiences, States' conduct of technical assistance missions already party to these protocols and the establishment of a mechanism to monitor the development of national legislative frameworks aimed at ratification.

16. Encourage the ratification by ECOWAS Member States involved in the fight against migrant smuggling of all ECOWAS protocols and conventions against trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants to have a uniform legal arsenal to develop police cooperation between these States.

**2) Strengthening national tools for the operational fight against smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons and better coordinate these national tools at the regional level**

17. Support in African countries of origin and transit of migrants, the creation of Joint Investigation Teams (JITs), closely coordinated with national police and gendarmerie forces, armed forces and national guards, as well as the Joint Force of the G5 Sahel, whose mission is to identify and apprehend members of irregular migration and human trafficking networks, and ensure sustainable funding for the operation of these structures.

18. Support in the same countries to create a Rapid Action Monitoring and Response Groups (GAR-SI), aimed at stabilizing isolated areas and cross-border regions to stop the smuggling of migrants and fight against trafficking in persons. Ensure the sustainability and proper integration of these mechanisms by national authorities into the national defense and security forces network and the regional coordination of these national mechanisms to be able to combat transnational networks effectively.

19. Support the evolution of the EUCAP SAHEL Niger mandates, the EUCAP Mali missions, and EUBAM Libya, as part of a coordinated approach to EU common security and defense actions in the region strengthen support to internal security forces against smuggling networks.

20. based on AFIC (Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community), strengthen cooperation with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and establish operational partnerships between the countries of origin and transit of migration flows and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, in particular by further developing information exchange and joint analytical work concerning the management of borders, including the fight against the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and other illegal activities affecting border security.

21. Ensure regional coordination between national investigation teams to ensure the effective dismantling of transnational networks. In particular, establish a matrix of national contact points in charge of the fight against smuggling and trafficking networks to ensure regular exchanges between internal security services.

22. Ensuring the appropriation and well-functioning of information sharing systems by establishing in each country a centralized electronic police information system to ensure coordination in the fight against organized crime, including smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, which are currently under development in West Africa, such as the G5 Sahel Security Cooperation Platform (PCMS) and the Police Information System for West Africa (SIPAO/WAPIS).

**3) Strengthening the technical and material capacities of the Defense and Security Forces in charge of the fight against smuggling and trafficking in persons in countries of origin and transit.**

23. Develop and intensify training for members of the Defense and Security Forces in charge of the fight against the smuggling of migrants in all countries to develop specific knowledge in the field. The training activities carried out by EUCAP Sahel Niger and Mali can reference these training programs' development and conduct (detection of false documents, network investigations).

24. Support the setting up of infrastructures and the Defense and Security Forces' equipment in the framework of border control in sensitive areas on the irregular migration route of the Central Mediterranean (North Niger and North Chad).

**4) Strengthening judicial cooperation**

25. Support the establishment and strengthening of judicial cooperation mechanisms throughout West Africa. In particular, ensure the consolidation of the network of West African Central Authorities and Prosecutors (WACAP), established within ECOWAS and involving Mauritania, notably by financially supporting the mechanism's development.

26. Work on coordinating judicial networks with existing mutual legal assistance mechanisms in the countries of destination of migrants and victims of trafficking to have a coherent framework involving countries of origin, transit, and destination of irregular migration. Promote mechanisms for mutual legal assistance and extradition between States where such mechanisms do not exist.

**5) Strengthening border control**

27. Strengthen national border control mechanisms, involving both defense and internal security forces, to identify the routes used by irregular migration flows and enable the interception of means of transport used by smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons' networks.

28. Strengthen regional border surveillance mechanisms, whose action must combat the activity of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons networks. In this regard, support the full implementation of the mandate to combat smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons within the G5 Sahel, in particular by developing within the FPs (des PC de fuseau in French) a police and justice component to ensure the continuity of the criminal chain and appropriate judicial treatment of persons arrested.

#### **6) Protecting irregular migrants and victims of trafficking**

29. Support the joint work of the AU-EU-UN Tripartite Task Force set up at the Abidjan Summit to facilitate the international protection of asylum seekers currently in Libya and Niger, with a view to their care in the best human and material conditions by UNHCR and IOM, and in this framework, support programs for the assisted voluntary return of migrants.

30. Respect the terms of the commitments made in the joint declaration adopted in Paris on 28 August 2017 and reaffirmed at the European Union-African Union Summit in Abidjan on 29 November 2017 concerning the resettlement by European countries of refugees and asylum seekers evacuated from Libya.

31. Establish mechanisms for the referral, guidance, and care of victims of trafficking in persons to prevent them from being re-targeted by criminal trafficking networks. To set up support mechanisms for migrants apprehended together with the smugglers to avoid new solicitations or attempts at irregular migration.

32. Continue to support vulnerable migrants on their way back to facilitate their economic integration into their local communities;

#### **7) Ensuring sustainable development and the promotion of an alternative economy for the control of migration flows.**

33. Continue the effective implementation of the Valletta Plan by considering sustainable development programs to address the root causes of irregular migration and programs to control migration flows and the development of an alternative economy.

34. Promote economic alternatives to trafficking in the region and develop local populations' resilience through improved access to essential services and the creation of employment opportunities, especially for young people.

35. Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of UTF projects and other partners involved in the fight against the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons.

#### **8) Ensuring the follow-up of commitments**

36. Establish a permanent mechanism to follow up on the commitments made during this Meeting.

37. Organize on 18 June 2018, in Niamey, a regional consultation workshop on the fight against smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, which will bring together the Directors-General of Defense and Internal Security Services, Directors-General in charge of migration, national focal points in charge of the fight against smuggling and trafficking networks of the participating States, to accompany the practical implementation of the commitments contained in this declaration.

38. Inform the partner countries of the progress made in implementing the commitments in this declaration through the participants' contact points.