

Brussels, 15 December 2016

## European Council Conclusions on Migration and Cyprus (15 December 2016)

### I. MIGRATION

#### *External dimension*

1. The European Council recalls its October conclusions concerning the Eastern Mediterranean route. It reiterates its commitment to the EU-Turkey statement and underlines the importance of a full and non-discriminatory implementation of all aspects. It also renews its pledge to continue support for the countries along the Western Balkans route. It endorses the Joint Action Plan on the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement elaborated between Greece and the Commission and welcomes the fact that Greece has already taken first steps towards its implementation. The European Council calls upon all Member States to ensure speedy implementation of the Joint Action Plan.

2. The new Partnership Framework of cooperation is an important tool for addressing illegal migration and its root causes, particularly with regard to the Central Mediterranean route. The European Council welcomes the progress on implementation of the compacts with five African countries of origin or transit and the growing ownership in the partner countries. In the light of this experience, additional compacts or other forms of cooperation could be envisaged, taking into account the resources available. The objectives of the Partnership Framework set out by the European Council last June should be mainstreamed into other external instruments and policies of the EU and its Member States. The European Council calls upon Member States to continue and step up their engagement under the Partnership Framework and will keep progress on stemming the flows and improving return rates under close review.
3. In order to reinforce the implementation of the Valletta Action Plan and the Partnership Framework, the agreement reached in the Council on the European Fund for Sustainable Development and on the EIB External Lending Mandate should be followed by swift adoption of the relevant legislation. In this respect, the European Council welcomes the fact that the EIB has started to implement its Resilience Initiative for the Western Balkans and Southern Neighbourhood.
4. The European Council underlines the need to enhance support for the Libyan coastguard, including through EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia, so as to increase its capacity to prevent the loss of life at sea and break the business model of smugglers. In parallel, initiatives need to be taken to offer assisted voluntary return opportunities to migrants stranded in Libya and curtail dangerous journeys.
5. The European Council recalls the importance of adequate resources being put at the disposal of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the European Border and Coast Guard. It welcomes the fact that EASO will start recruiting dedicated staff to ensure a stable and sustainable capacity. It also reiterates the need to remain vigilant on other routes, including in the Western Mediterranean, so as to be able to rapidly react to developments.

### *Internal dimension*

6. The effective application of the principles of responsibility and solidarity remains a shared objective. Sustained efforts over the past months to review the Common European Asylum System have shown some areas of convergence, while other areas require further work. Building on this work, the Council is invited to continue the process with the aim of achieving consensus on the EU's asylum policy during the incoming Presidency.
7. Member States should further intensify their efforts to accelerate relocation, in particular for unaccompanied minors, and existing resettlement schemes.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is without prejudice to the position of Hungary and Slovakia, as contained in the Court proceedings launched relating to Council Decision n°2015/1601, and to the position of Poland, which has intervened in support of the applicants.

#### **IV. CYPRUS**

21. Following a presentation by the President of the Republic of Cyprus on the negotiations on a Cyprus settlement, the European Council reiterated its support to the ongoing process for the reunification of Cyprus. The EU, taking into account that Cyprus is and will remain a member of our Union after the Settlement, stands ready to participate at the Geneva Conference on Cyprus on 12 January 2017.
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