


DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
NOTE TO EDITORS
UPDATE ON THE VISIT OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AU COMMISSION TO LIBYA AND SUBSEQUENT AFRICAN UNION EFFORTS

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – 2 December 2017: As a follow-up to his communiqué on the plight of African migrants in Libya, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, dispatched the Commissioner for Social Affairs, Mrs Amira El Fadil, to Libya, as his Special Envoy to consult on the conditions of stranded African migrants in Libya.

The Special Envoy, accompanied by the Director of the Department for Social Affairs of the AUC, the Special Adviser to the Director-General of the International Organization for Migration, and a Humanitarian Affairs Officer from the Political Affairs Department, visited Libya on 27 November 2017.

The delegation met with the following Libyan authorities:

- Mr. Fayez Mustafa al-Sarraj, Chairman of the Presidential Council of Libya and Prime Minister of the Government of National Accord;
- Mr. Mohamed Abdel Wahid Mohamed, Minister of Justice; and
- Mr. Al Siddiq Ahmed Al Sour, Head of the Investigation, Office of the Attorney-General

In addition, the Special Envoy visited one of the Government-controlled migrants detention centres – Tariq Al Matar - that hosts about 3,820 migrants. She also met with the representatives of the African community in Libya at the Libyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thereafter, she held a press conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Special Envoy unequivocally reaffirmed the strong condemnation by the African Union of the auctioning and mistreatment of African migrants. She expressed the African Union's continued commitment to work with Libyan authorities to carry out an immediate investigation on the inhumane situation of African migrants in Libya and to identify those responsible and bring them to justice.

The Special Envoy expressed concern at the overcrowded and sanitation conditions of the Tariq Al Matar detention centre, highlighting the serious risk of an epidemic outbreak such as scabies, already noticed amongst infants.

The Special Envoy observed that the present migrant crisis and its resolution are beyond the control of the Libyan authorities and what they can handle on their own. There is need for the African Union and the larger international community to further support their efforts. The Libyan authorities expressed willingness and commitment to cooperate with the African Union Commission to lead the process of repatriation or migrants and resolution of the crisis. The Commissioner assured the Libyan authorities that the Commission would spare no effort to assist in the rescue and voluntary repatriation process of the stranded African nationals in Libya.

In this regard, the African Union, working together with the International Organization for Migration, will immediately put in place a Voluntary Humanitarian Evacuation of Migrants plan as follows:

1. Implement a scaled-up evacuation process that will repatriate additional 15,000 migrants currently in Government-controlled detention centres before the end of the year - there are currently at least 20,000 migrants in Government-controlled detention centres;
2. Engage Member States whose nationals in Libya are to be evacuated, with the view to:
 - i. Identifying their nationals;
 - ii. Issuing them with emergency travel documents;
 - iii. Providing flight and landing clearance; and
 - iv. Facilitating sustainable reintegration in their home countries.

The AU Commission will also work with the Libyan authorities for the closure of all detention centres and de-criminalisation of irregular migrants.

On 29 November 2017, the Chairperson of the Commission addressed the plight of the African migrants in his statement to the 5th African Union-European Union Summit in Abidjan. He also participated in a number of high-level consultations to galvanize international support towards practical efforts aimed at resolving the issue. In this respect, a tripartite meeting between the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations was held on 29 November. It agreed to put in place a Task Force to save and protect lives of migrants and refugees along the routes and, in particular, inside Libya, accelerating the assisted voluntary returns to countries of origin and the resettlement of those in need of international protection. This action will build on, expand and accelerate the ongoing work done by countries of origin, as well as by the International Organization for Migration with European Union funding.

On 1 December, the Chairperson had a telephone conversation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi wherein they exchanged views on how UNHCR can assist the current efforts, in particular with respect to the protection needs of refugees or asylum seekers currently in Libya and how these could be best addressed.