

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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AU-EU-UN taskforce meets to revitalize the tripartite cooperation to enhance the protection of stranded migrants and refugees in Libya

As a follow-up to the [Declaration of the AU-EU Summit, held from 17-18 February 2022](#), that committed to revitalize the work of the tripartite taskforce, the taskforce members met on 1st November 2022 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Chaired by H.E. Amb. Minata Samate Cessouma, the Special Envoy of the AU Commission Chairperson & Commissioner of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, and attended by Mrs. Birgitte Markussen, EU Ambassador to the AU and UNECA, Mrs. Cisse Mariama Mohamed, Director, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Special Liaison Office to the AU and UNECA and Mr. Buti Kale, UNHCR Representative to the AU and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Participants took note of the current status of the assisted voluntary return programme for stranded migrants in Libya to countries of origin, evacuation of asylum-seekers and refugees to Niger and Rwanda Emergency Transit Mechanisms (ETMs), as well as the challenges that are encountered by the taskforce. They also explored measures to improve effectiveness of the taskforce, including, the expansion of its mandate and geographical coverage.

In her remarks, the Special Envoy expressed the commitment of the AU to continue engagement with Libya, concerned Member States, and other relevant stakeholders, to champion African solutions to challenges faced by Libya and further reiterated a need to improve and coordinate actions to counteract activities of transnational organized criminal groups. These organized criminal groups perpetrate human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, including, slavery, sexual abuse and gross violation and abuse of migrants' human rights. The Special Envoy, Amb. Samate highlighted key achievements of the taskforce, including the facilitation of the return of over 60,000 stranded migrants to their countries of origin and the mobilization of AU Member States to take action exemplified by Rwanda and Niger, which enabled the evacuation of about 5,200 vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers from Libya through the ETM, providing the much-needed emergency protection. The Special Envoy emphasized extreme importance of not only revitalizing but also broadening the mandate and geographical scope of the taskforce and called for continuous engagement and cooperation, increased awareness and advocacy with all relevant actors, including concerned Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

The EU Ambassador to the AU reiterated the need to align the work of the taskforce with ongoing political processes in Libya. She noted the importance of swiftly finalizing the taskforce terms of reference as the first step, to facilitate a more structured collaboration at different levels, as well as undertaking, as a second step, a situational analysis and assessment to feed into the discussions in respect to the need to explore possibilities of broadening the mandate and geographical scope of the taskforce.

The UNHCR Representative echoed the sense of urgency needed to react to the current situation, including, the need to provide protection, humanitarian support and assistance to asylum-seekers, refugees and internally displaced persons in Libya. He noted the need to focus on mixed migratory movements in their entirety and not only those in and headed to and

from Libya but also to other regions of the continent. He informed that approximately 43,000 refugees and asylum-seekers continue to be hosted by Libya and that since 2017, about 14,361 refugee evacuations were conducted from Libya, of which 9,161 were directly resettled to third countries from Libya, 3,889 to the Niger ETM and 1,279 to the Rwanda ETM.

The IOM Representative congratulated the Special Envoy on her appointment and reiterated IOM's commitment to support the process of revitalizing the taskforce. IOM informed that about 667,440 migrants are currently in Libya and reported that since 2022, about 2,062 stranded migrants have so far been facilitated to return back to their countries of origin. Reiterating the need to support Libya, to address migration matters in a comprehensive manner, including, issues related to migrants' human right violation and abuse, arbitrary detention and access to those detained.

As part of the recommendations going forward, the taskforce agreed to:

- swiftly finalize the proposed updated terms of reference of the taskforce to reflect on the current situation;
- conduct an in-depth situation analysis and assessment in a bid to revitalize and explore options to be considered in the expansion of the mandate and geographical coverage of the taskforce and;
- undertake a mission to Libya, to assess the humanitarian, migrants', refugees', asylum-seekers' and displaced persons' situation so as to inform the scope of interventions that need to be taken.

Finally, all the members of the taskforce agreed on the importance to focus efforts on:

- addressing the root causes in countries of origin;
- assessing conditions surrounding migrants in countries of transit;
- missing migrants;
- as well as emphasized the need to further involve and engage with the Libyan authorities, neighboring countries to Libya, concerned RECs and relevant stakeholders in the work of the taskforce and;
- committed to remain seized with the matter.

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