Situation in the Mediterranean and need for a holistic EU approach to migration

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The Foreign Affairs council adopted **conclusions on migration** in the context of the unprecedented migratory and refugee crisis that the EU is now facing, marked by a sharp increase of mixed migratory flows along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans, in parallel with a constant flow along the Central Mediterranean route.

The Council confirmed the need of a **comprehensive and balanced external migration and asylum policy for the EU** and reaffirmed its full commitment to human rights, including to the situation of women and girls as well as other vulnerable persons and groups.

Addressing the root causes of migratory flows: the Council confirmed its commitment to mobilise all appropriate instruments and policies and support efforts to address the root causes of migratory flows, in particular conflicts, political instability, human rights violations, poor socio-economic development, including lack of employment opportunities, poor governance and climate change.

In this regard, the Council continues to **support diplomatic initiatives by the UN to find solutions to the conflicts in Syria and Libya**, underpinned by efforts of the HRVP, the Commission and Member States.

The importance of **close cooperation with first countries of asylum, countries of origin and transit** to jointly address this common challenge was also underlined.

Cooperation with Turkey: the Council considered it essential to step-up EU-Turkey cooperation on support of refugees and migration and looked forward to an **agreement with Turkey** as part of a comprehensive agenda based on mutual commitments.

Financing: the Council welcomed the decision to substantially increase the funding of the **EU Regional Trust Fund** recently established in response to the Syrian crisis (the "Madad Fund") with over 500 EUR million in EU funding to be matched by efforts from EU Member States and other countries. The extension of its scope to the Western Balkans was proposed.

Dialogue with African countries: the Council recalled the importance to engage in a comprehensive dialogue with African countries of origin and transit in order to **jointly manage migration and asylum flows in the spirit of partnership, ownership and shared responsibility**.

In this context, it called for a closer engagement with African partners through the EU-Africa Migration and Mobility continental dialogue, the EU's regional strategies (Sahel, Horn of Africa, Gulf of Guinea) and dialogues (Rabat, Khartoum) and the Cotonou Partnership Agreement.

High Level Dialogues on migration: such dialogues on the broad agenda on migration and asylum should be encouraged, carried out in a spirit of partnership and should help identify leverage and enhance cooperation, in particular on readmission.

The Council reiterated its call on the Commission, together with the EEAS, to propose, **within six months, comprehensive and tailor-made packages** to reinforce overall cooperation with third-countries **in order to implement effectively readmission and returns**.

Cooperation with international partners: calling on the international community to increase its efforts to deal with this crisis, the Council wanted to see further reinforcement of cooperation with key international partners and with the **United Nations**, in particular UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UN Development Programme (UNDP), as well as with organisations such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Fight against criminal networks of traffickers and smugglers: reaffirming that this issue remains a priority, the Council welcomed the transition to the second phase of **EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA on the high seas.** It invited the HRVP to continue work in order to allow the transition to the successive phases of the operation.

It also asked for the reinforcement of EUCAP Sahel Niger.

Libya: underlining that a solution to the Libyan conflict remains crucial to any effort in addressing migratory flows through the Central Mediterranean, the Council recalled that the EU stands ready to **resume support to the Libyan authorities to address irregular migration**, especially in the area of border management and the fight against trafficking of human beings.