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

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The Council adopted **conclusions on measures to handle the refugee and migration crisis**. In full cooperation with the Commission and bearing in mind the necessity to safeguard the functioning of the Schengen area and to reduce migratory pressures, the Council decided:

- to encourage Member States and relevant third countries to intensify ongoing efforts to **substantially increase reception capacities**;
- the establishment of **hotspots** in Italy and Greece will be intensified, so that all of these function by end of November 2015 as previously agreed;
- all participating Member States will **speed up the relocation process**, notably by communicating their capacities for first relocations and by nominating as appropriate relocation liaison officers to Italy and Greece, preferably by 16 November 2015. The Council and the Commission support Italy and Greece in their **decisions to register migrants** before further handling their case on the mainland, in particular with Eurodac machines provided by Member States;
- that Member States, with the full support of the Commission and Frontex, will substantially **improve the return rate**;
- to overcome the potential lack of cooperation of migrants as they arrive into the European Union and while fully respecting the fundamental rights and the principle of non-refoulement, Member States will **make use of possibilities provided by the EU acquis**, such as (1) asylum procedures at borders or transit zones; (2) accelerated procedures; (3) non-admissibility of subsequent asylum applications by the individuals concerned; (4) coercive measures, including, as a last resort, detention for a maximum period necessary for the completion of underlying procedures;
- to fully support the Commission in pursuing **contingency planning of humanitarian assistance** for the Western Balkans;
- to assist the Member States concerned in respecting their legal obligation to perform **adequate controls**, to manage and to regain controls of the external borders and increase coordination of actions relating to border management. This will involve a range of supporting measures by Frontex, gradually extending, as necessary, to the **deployment of Rapid Border Intervention Teams** (RABITs) in accordance with EU rules;
- to support the upscaling by 1 December 2015 of the **Poseidon** Sea Joint Operation in Greece within the current operational plan;
- to conduct a thorough debate on the **functioning of the Schengen area**;
- to invite Europol to accelerate the establishment of the **European Migrant Smuggling Centre** (EMSC) and invite Member States, in coordination with the Commission, to set up by 1 December 2015 a network of single operational contact points on migrant smuggling;
- to continue **examining pending legislative proposals** on a crisis relocation mechanism and on safe countries of origin as already planned, as well as on other priority actions such as on the adaptation of the Dublin system and on the gradual establishment of an integrated management system for external borders;
- to invite the Commission and the High Representative to press for practical results on return and readmission in their **bilateral dialogues**, notably during the upcoming high-level meetings with Afghanistan, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tunisia and Turkey;
- the first **European Migration Liaison Officers** (EMLOs) should be deployed as a matter of priority to Ethiopia, Niger, Pakistan and Serbia by the end of January 2016;

- to support accelerating the fulfilment of the **visa liberalisation roadmap with Turkey** towards all participating Member States and the full implementation of the readmission agreement, in the context of the enhanced cooperation foreseen in the action plan;
- to define, as a matter of urgency, a **common information strategy** addressed to asylum seekers, migrants, smugglers and traffickers aiming at (1) discouraging migrants to embark on perilous journey and to have recourse to smugglers, (2) explaining how EU rules on the management of external borders and international protection operate, including resettlement, relocation and return.