Addressing refugee and migrant movements: the role of EU External Action

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs Committee on Development adopted a joint own-initiative report by Agustín DÍAZ DE MERA GARCÍA CONSUEGRA (EPP, ES) and Elena VALENCIANO (S&D, ES) on addressing refugee and migrant movements: the role of EU External Action.

The report has been adopted pursuant to Rule 55 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament (Joint committee meetings).

Members underlined that in today's world there is an unprecedented level of human mobility. The international community must urgently undertake the strengthening of a **common response to address the challenges and opportunities that this phenomenon represents**. Given the multiple complex causes of human mobility, Members called for evidence-based decisions to differentiate its elements and develop targeted policy responses.

They considered that international migration can contribute to socioeconomic development, as it has done historically. However, **xenophobic, populist and nationalistic discourses** have to be countered. They welcomed the **'Together' campaign launched by the UN** to reduce negative perceptions and attitudes towards refugees and migrants and called on the EU institutions to fully cooperate with the UN in support of this campaign.

Members stressed that the humanitarian aid system is extremely overstretched and that its financial resources will never be sufficient to respond to forced displacement crises.

EU development cooperation should continue to address and effectively tackle the **root causes of forced displacement and migration,** namely armed conflict, persecution on any grounds, gender-based violence, bad governance, poverty, lack of economic opportunities and climate change.

Members underlined that, in line with EU principles, one overall objective of the EU's external migration policies should be to establish a **multilateral governance regime** for international migration, for which the recent UN High-Level Meeting is a first step.

Better managed international migration: a global responsibility: Members considered the recent decision by the US administration to temporarily ban citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the US and to temporarily suspend the US refugee system fuels anti-immigration and xenophobic discourses. They welcomed the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting to Address Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants of 19 September 2016 and the hosting of the Leaders' Summit by the USA, as **migration flows are a global responsibility which demand an effective global response** and enhanced cooperation between all stakeholders to achieve a sustainable solution fully respecting human rights. They stressed that global cooperation on migration and mobility should be built upon **regional and sub-regional frameworks**. In this regard, the EU is called on to strengthen cooperation plans with regional organisations such as the African Union, League of Arab States and Gulf Cooperation Council. Members called on EU Member States to fully respect their own pledges concerning readmission agreements.

EU external action and partnerships with third countries: Members stressed that EU external action should be peace-oriented, proactive and forward-looking, instead of mainly reactive. They expressed support for closer cooperation between the EU and third countries in a number of fields to avoid new

crises. They stressed the need to **put in place a comprehensive approach** to external conflict and crises by **mapping** the direct and indirect economic, environmental, social, fiscal and political impacts of displacement on third countries in order to better adjust development policies to their needs.

Towards a common migration policy: while condemning the increasing criminalisation of migration, Members called for the establishment of a **genuine, human rights-based common European migration policy** based on the principle of solidarity among Member States as enshrined in Article 80 TFEU, with the securing of the EU's external borders and adequate legal channels for safe and orderly migration. Close cooperation with NGOs and experts working in the countries of origin of asylum-seekers is essential.

Members are extremely concerned by the **continuing conflict in Syria** and called on the EU and the Member States to improve means dedicated to conflict prevention and crisis management. They expressed their full support to Syria's neighbouring countries, which continue to demonstrate extraordinary solidarity in hosting millions of refugees despite limited resources. On the other hand, they expressed regret that in the EU migration policy framework and refugee movements response, the EU and its Members States have opted for the conclusion of agreements with third countries, which **avoid the parliamentary scrutiny** attached to the Community method.

Appropriate means for action: Members acknowledged the Commission's proposal for a new and **ambitious External Investment Plan** (EIP) to mobilise investments in the EU's neighbouring countries and developing third countries. They noted that the proposed **European Fund for Sustainable Development** will be partly financed through the European Development Fund (EDF), the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) allocations, which constitutes the use of development funds to foster private sector investment.

Members underlined that the sum of EUR 3.35 billion earmarked for the new European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) as part of the EIP corresponds to over 5% of the total funds available from the EDF, DCI and European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) under the multiannual financial framework. They called on the Commission to provide more details regarding this estimation and the expected impact of these amounts.

Lastly, they noted that the creation of trust funds and *ad hoc* financial instruments, while helping to pool resources and bringing speed and flexibility to EU action, can also put at risk development effectiveness principles and undermines the unity of the budget and Parliament's budgetary authority. Parliament should be given a greater supervisory role in the use of these instruments.