

MINUTES

of the 1st Operational Committee for the North of Africa Window of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (the EU Emergency Trust Fund)

I. Introduction

On 16 June 2016, the Operational Committee for the North of Africa Window of the EU Emergency Trust Fund held its first meeting. It followed the official launch of the EU Emergency Trust Fund at the Migration Summit in Valletta on 11 and 12 November 2015, and a meeting of the Operational Committee common to the three Windows (Sahel and Lake Chad, Horn of Africa and North Africa) held on 16 December 2015 to present the state of play of contributions and discuss the rules of procedure.

The objective of the Operational Committee for the North of Africa Window was to have a first exchange on a forward-looking perspective for the implementation of the EU Emergency Trust Fund in the North of Africa region, on the one hand, and to decide on 3 action documents for a total amount of €27.5 million submitted by the Trust Fund Manager, on the other hand. The agenda of the meeting is enclosed in Annex 1. The meeting was attended by EU Member States, European donors, partner countries from the North of Africa region and the regional organisation Union for the Mediterranean.

II. Agenda Items Discussed

II.1 The state of play of the operational programming

Representatives of the Commission and the External Action Service introduced the North of Africa window's purpose as a flexible financing instrument for migration management projects. They emphasised that coordination between services and with existing actions will be central to the Trust Fund's work. They noted that actions under the Trust Fund will respond to the priorities of partner countries.

The manager of the North of Africa window of the Trust Fund gave an overview of the state of play for the North of Africa window (see Annex 1), including the methodology for project formulation and implementation. She explained that the focus of this window is on migration management, in line with the decision taken at the Valletta Summit, because countries in the region are both countries of transit and destination and of origin. Root causes of irregular migration are being addressed under ENI funding and will also be addressed via actions of the Trust Fund where there is a strong link to migration. The Strategic Orientations of the North of Africa window are based on five main axes. The first four of these match the Valletta Action Plan. The fifth axis addresses the migratory routes. This is the main added value of the Trust Fund and is also a cross cutting issue in the Valletta Action Plan. Going forwards, action documents will highlight which pillar of the Valletta Action Plan is being addressed to improve clarity on this. The manager also explained that EU Delegations are working on operational guidelines for each country which will be presented to the next operational committee. The latter will translate on a country-by-country basis the regional operational framework annexed to the Constitutive agreement of the Trust Fund.

Members welcomed the addition of the North of Africa window to the Trust Fund, as well as the emphasis on coordinating existing actions and actors in the region and noted the strategic importance of the region for managing migration. Members welcomed the alignment of the Trust Fund with the Valletta Action Plan, as well as its role in supporting the Khartoum and Rabat processes. The Tunisian and Algerian representatives noted that their countries have put forward proposals to the respective EU Delegations and seek to work closely with them to ensure that projects are comprehensive, in line with the preference for larger programmes.

The Egyptian Ambassador highlighted the efforts the African Union is making to tackle trafficking of human beings and migrant smuggling. He stressed that Egypt is under increasing pressure as a country of destination and transit for migrants and refugees and welcomed the EU's assistance in migration management and support for refugees. The Chair agreed that the increase in refugees in Egypt is a source of common concern. He commended Egypt and the Egyptian population for their spirit of hospitality towards refugees. The Chair also noted that the Trust Fund is one among several instruments that can be used to support refugees and assist with migration management. The French representative asked that the question of unaccompanied minors in Egypt be addressed through the Trust Fund.

Partner countries emphasised the need for national ownership of projects and of the operational guidelines, and Members agreed on the need for increased coordination. Members were also in agreement on the need for both regional projects within the window and transregional projects between windows under the Trust Fund and of an increased attention drawn on strong monitoring and evaluation frameworks. This is an important added value of the Trust Fund. Moreover, it is important in the context of the limited funding available for the window.

The Chair closed this part of the meeting, agreeing that there is a need to formalise coordination with Member States and other donors in partner countries where this is not already the case.

II.2. Presentation of projects for approval

The Trust Fund Manager presented the 3 action fiches on the Agenda submitted for the approval of the Operational Committee (see Annex 2). Individual action fiches are enclosed from Annex 3 to Annex 5.

A. Egypt: Enhancing the Response to Migration Challenges in Egypt (ERMCE) - €11.5 million

Summary

This project has two components. Component 1 aims at building the capacities of the Egyptian administrations and institutions dealing with migration issues at national and local level. Component 2 aims at increasing protection and socio-economic opportunities for communities, in which a high number of Egyptians are prone to migration, and for returnees, as well as for migrants and refugees. The project will last for 54 months and responds to the priorities of the Egyptian government that are not already addressed through ENI funding and other EU instruments. It is in line with the revised European Neighbourhood Policy and responds to the priorities outlined by Egypt in the Khartoum process.

Comments

Members of the Committee welcomed the dual emphasis on migration governance and protection to vulnerable migrants. The Belgian representative noted that "Médecins Sans Frontières Belgique" do significant work on protection in Egypt and should therefore be involved in the coordination of actions. The Danish representative indicated that the analysis of risks and assumptions was limited.

The Trust Fund manager clarified that the difference in funding allocation between Components 1 and 2 is due to the difference in resource needs. The institutional component (Component 1) is less costly since it consists in capacity building delivered through a peer-to-peer approach. This component is a starting point for possible future additional actions in this area. Actions for this project will be coordinated with projects funded by ENI also addressing root causes (for example the programmes supporting the education and vocational training sectors) and local coordination within the EU Delegation and between the EU Delegation and other actors will be a priority.

The Egyptian Ambassador expressed his concern that neither the Egyptian government nor the Egyptian embassy in Brussels had had time to assess the Action Document prior to the meeting of the Committee. The Chair noted that the programme had been discussed in meetings between the EU Delegation and the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, notably on 18 April, and that it had been discussed with Egyptian migration authorities, among which the National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Illegal Migration (NCCPIM) which is an interinstitutional Committee chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Coordinating Committee on Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons (NCCTIP) at the Ministry of Justice as well as the Ministry of Manpower. The programme had been discussed as well at coordination meetings with Member States.

Conclusions

The Action was adopted "in principle" by the committee, subject to further consultation with the Egyptian authorities on the programme. Should Egypt request substantial changes affecting the scope of the current programme, a written procedure would be introduced or alternatively the revised programme would be submitted to the next Operational Committee.

B. Libya: Strengthening protection and resilience of displaced populations in Libya - €6 million

Summary

The action aims to strengthen protection and resilience of displaced populations in Libya (including refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, internally displaced people (IDPs) and host communities) and to build the capacity of local authorities to manage migration flows in a protection sensitive manner. It aims to improve the access of refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, IDPs and host communities to basic services, including, in particular, protection, health and psychosocial support. It also aims to raise awareness of displaced populations about the risks of perilous land and sea journeys and their rights and services available in Libya, including social cohesion with IDPs and host communities, and to enhance capacity of relevant stakeholders to manage migration influxes in a protection sensitive way.

Comments

Members supported the programme and praised the emphasis on improving the access of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, IDPs and host communities to basic services. Germany and Sweden are

working with UNICEF on improving access to services for displaced persons and noted that coordination will be important.

Some members were concerned that the ability to implement actions will be highly dependent on the security situation. However, the EU is already funding local projects in Libya, so there is an existing basis for actions. Sweden expressed some concern that the focus on local activities might undermine the Government of National Accord (GNA) by creating alternative structures. The political situation in Libya is evolving. However the GNA does not currently have the capacity or the institutional structures in place to provide services that are urgently needed. Actions will be properly articulated with the government, to ensure that they support the GNA's credibility and legitimacy.

Members emphasised the need for a rights based approach, particularly in actions related to migration management. This approach is fully integrated into the programme and will also be supported through the Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP). In relation with the report issued recently by Amnesty International, it was recalled that training of the Libyan coastguard is in the mandate of EUNAVFOR MED, and comes under the remit of CSDP missions. However, EU funds are mobilised to build the capacity of the Libyan coastguard on human rights issues. Migration governance will be key, but it will depend on the political situation.

On the security situation, International Medical Corps UK is one of the few international NGOs with international staff in Tripoli. Libyan Red Crescent Society is the main partner but it will be important not to overstretch its capacity, as it is a major partner for other projects and donors as well. The Danish Refugee Council also has local staff. Save the Children is likely to carry out work in the south of Libya. This is an evolving context so it is necessary to assess where action will be possible and effective. This is why locations have not yet been identified within the action document.

Conclusions

Action fiche approved.

C. Regional: DEV-pillar of the Regional Development and Protection Programme in the North of Africa - €10 million

Summary

The programme will reinforce the development pillar of the RDPP. Result 1 of the RDPP aims at assessing the needs and enhancing the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs), including media, dealing with migration issues. This result is already being addressed by a project adopted under ENI last year. Result 2: improved interactions at community level and better access to migrant-friendly services. Result 3: creating a business friendly environment for migrants and host communities, including through skills matching. Result 4: improved knowledge and information sharing including at regional level. RDPPs are fully in line with the recently approved EC communication "Lives in Dignity: from Aid dependence to Self-reliance¹".

Comments

¹ COM(2016) 234 final

Members supported the programme, welcoming the inclusion of a regional programme and the partnering with IOM. They emphasised the need for coordination of actions. The national needs assessments will be carried out by IOM, which has presence in all five countries of the North of Africa window. These will be shared with partner countries' national authorities when the draft documents have been prepared. The RDPP is a regional programme but decisions about specific national actions will be made by the EU Delegations and will be shared with the countries concerned.

In working with CSOs, organisations will be selected on a case by case basis and no selection has been made in advance. The EU Delegation, alongside stakeholders and partner countries, will take CSOs' capacities and expertise into account when deciding which organisations to work with. The aim is for example to take advantage of the Trust Fund's flexibility in order to continue successful actions rather than awarding grants through the lengthy call for proposals process.

The RDPP will not intervene where there are existing bilateral actions or programmes. Cross border actions are often challenging to implement. However the RDPP will focus on regional actions where possible, such as a crowd funding website for small businesses and the internet portal for self-employment, as well as knowledge sharing-related activities.

Headquarters and EU Delegations will work with Italy and the members of the RDPP steering committee to ensure that coordination is carried out with the AMIF-funded protection pillar and that the development component is integrated into the steering committee's work. Belgium has recently signed a new cooperation agreement with Morocco. Coordination between these actions will also be ensured.

The Commission hopes to hold the first RDPP regional workshop in the second half of 2016, where it will be possible to share the needs assessments, national action plans, locations for work at the community level, and to present the tools.

Conclusions

Action fiche approved.

III. Any other business

In future, documents for the Operational Committee will be sent to non-EU members by email.

Agreement of action documents from partner countries will be sought in advance of meetings of the Operational Committee for future programmes.