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**NOTE**

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From: Politico-Military Group  
To: Political and Security Committee

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Subject: EU Naval Force in the Central Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED  
Operation Sophia) Updated Information Communication Strategy 2019

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**DOCUMENT PARTIALLY ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC (29.10.2019)**

Following agreement in the Politico-Military Group on 26 June 2019, the Political and Security Committee is invited to approve the EU Naval Force in the Central Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia) Updated Information Communication Strategy 2019 as set out in the Annex.

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**EU NAVAL FORCE IN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN  
(EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA)  
UPDATED INFORMATION COMMUNICATION STRATEGY 2019**

**I. BACKGROUND<sup>1</sup>**

1. EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA (Operation Sophia) was launched on 22 June 2015 to contribute to the disruption of smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean.
2. Since then the mandate has been reinforced and renewed on several occasions:
  - a. On 20 June 2016, the Council extended the mandate of Operation Sophia until 27 July 2017 and reinforced it by adding two supporting tasks:
    - training the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy (LCGN);
    - contributing to the implementation of the UN arms embargo on the high seas off the coast of Libya in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2292 (2016), replaced by UNSCR 2473 (2019).
  - b. On 25 July 2017, the Council extended the Operation to 31 December 2018 and amended the mandate to include:
    - setting up a monitoring mechanism of trainees to ensure the effectiveness of the training in all its aspects and the long-term efficiency of the training of the LCGN. Monitoring is currently focused on understanding the LCGN's ability to perform their mission, monitoring their behaviour, and helping them identify lessons learned. Full respect of human rights is a key consideration in that context;

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<sup>1</sup> This Information Communication Strategy is an internal document. Background information is for internal use and not meant for public dissemination.

- conducting surveillance activities and gathering information on illegal trafficking, including information on crude oil and other illegal exports that are contrary to UNSCR 2146 (2014) and UNSCR 2362 (2017);
  - enhancing the possibilities for sharing information on trafficking in human beings with Member States' law enforcement agencies, the European Border and Coastguard Agency (EBCGA, commonly known as Frontex) and Europol.
3. Operation Sophia is part of the EU's comprehensive approach to migration and complements other strands of action, from the work of the African Union-EU-UN Taskforce to support and assist migrants and refugees in Libya, to the work in the neighbouring countries starting from Niger. It has to be seen in the wider context of the EU's actions along the Central Mediterranean migration route. Operation Sophia contributes not only to disrupting the smugglers business model through military assets and by training the LCGN, but also to the implementation of the UN arms embargo on Libya and the gathering of information on illegal trafficking, including oil smuggling.
  4. Building partnerships remains a key objective for the Operation. It continues to actively cooperate with key stakeholders, including neighbouring countries, civil society organisations (CSOs), and international and national organisations dealing with issues of shared interest, such as irregular migration in the Mediterranean and maritime security.
  5. Through its extensive network of contacts, Operation Sophia has established the Shared Awareness and De-confliction in the Mediterranean (SHADE MED) forum. This forum has resulted in a better understanding between civilian and military actors operating in the Mediterranean Sea, enhancing interaction and assisting with the development of an overall framework for coordinating different activities and developing best practices to deal with common security challenges. It has contributed in particular to identifying how all regional maritime stakeholders can contribute to efforts that effectively address irregular migration.

6. On 29 March 2019 the Council agreed to the extension of the mandate of Operation Sophia for six months until 30 September 2019 and the Operation Commander was directed by the PSC, for operational reasons, to temporarily suspend the deployment of Operation Sophia's naval assets to the Area of Operation for the duration of this extension, **DELETED**

An updated version of the Information Communication Strategy was subsequently requested by the PSC.

7. **DELETED**

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### **III. KEY EU STAKEHOLDERS**

- The High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy;
- EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA;
- the HR/VP Spokesperson's Team;
- the EEAS (in particular EEAS Strategic Communication Division (CSDP Team and Task Force South));
- the European Council;
- the Council of the EU;
- the Chairman of the EU Military Committee;
- the EU Military Staff;
- the European Commission;
- the European Parliament (in particular the Committee on Foreign Affairs/Subcommittee on Security and Defence, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and the Committee on Development);
- the EU Delegations in the region and in relevant countries of origin and transit of irregular migrants;
- the EU Delegations, especially to the UN, relevant UN agencies, non-EU members of the UN Security Council;
- the EC representations in Member States' capitals.

#### **IV. TARGET AUDIENCES**

All information communication activities will continue to be premised on the assumption that the target audiences are broad and include i.a. EU citizens and civil society, international partners, but also citizens, civil society and authorities in the Mediterranean region as well as in the countries of origin and transit of migrants and refugees. Whilst the overarching narrative on the operation's strategic objectives remains the same, the concrete interests and added value differ depending on the respective target group.

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