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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

of: High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration (HLWG)
on: 9-10 March 2011

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Subject: Summary of discussions

1. Global Forum on Migration and Development

Representatives from Switzerland, which chairs the Global Forum in 2011, presented its plans for the incoming Session. The **Group** had an exchange of views on this subject.

2. RELEX

The **Chair** provided information on the developments concerning the issues related to migration, which are considered in the framework of the RELEX geographical Working Parties (see Annex I to this Note).

3. Instruments of the Global Approach to Migration

a) Migration missions

The **Chair** and the **Commission representative**, which made reference to the relevant joint Report (7282/11 ASIM 22 RELEX 213 RESTREINT UE), provided information on the outcome of the Migration Mission to Cameroon, held in Yaoundé on 7-9 February 2011.

b) Mobility Partnerships

The **Commission representative** provided information on the state of play of existing (Cape Verde, Moldova and Georgia) and planned (Armenia, Ghana) Mobility Partnerships.

c) Future Commission Communication on the evaluation of the Global Approach to Migration

The **Commission representative** provided information on the state of play of preparation of the above Communication, which is expected to be issued by the end of this year.

The **Chair** indicated that the subject of the evaluation of the Global Approach to Migration will be included in the agenda of the next meeting of the Group.

d) Follow-up to the Euro-African Ministerial Conferences on Migration and Development of Rabat and Paris

ES and the **Commission representative** drew attention to the Expert Meeting on social rights of migrants and their portability under a transnational framework, to be held in Rabat on 31 March - 1 April 2011, and invited delegations to take part in this event.

4. Building Migration Partnerships

The **Group** had an exchange of views on a revised version of the draft Action Plan (7158/11 ASIM 21 RELEX 200).

The **Chair**, which took note of the delegations' observations and invited them to send possible written comments by 31 March 2011, said that it will prepare a new draft, to be considered at the next meeting.

CZ and **PL** provided information on the Workshop on BMP Strategy, which gathered the EU and non-EU partners of the process, held in Kiev on 15-16 March 2011

5. Regional cooperation

Following the discussion on this issue at the previous meeting on the basis of the relevant questionnaire (18238/10 ASIM 129 RELEX 1147), the **Chair** presented a summary of the replies received by the Member States (7117/11 ASIM 20 RELEX 199).

6. Söderköping process

SE and the **Chair** presented the latest developments concerning this process (an information document is attached to this Note as Annex II). The Group had an exchange of views on this subject.

7. EU-LAC

The **Chair** provided information on the meeting of the EU-LAC Brussels-based Working Group on Migration, which took place on 17 February 2011, as well as on the organisation of the V EU-LAC High Level Meeting on Migration.

8. EU-Russia

The **Group** had an exchange of view on the launch of a migration dialogue with Russia.

The **Chair** indicated that this issue will be further addressed at the next meeting of the Group.

9. Current asylum situation: presentation by UNHCR

A UNHCR representative provided information on the existing asylum trends in the world.

The **Group** had an exchange of view on this subject.

10. Situation in the Mediterranean Region

Following a presentation from an IOM representative on the action that this organisation and other stakeholders are currently taking in this area, the **Commission representative** and **IT** provided information on the latest developments in relation to migration and migration related issues.

11. EU-Libya

The **Commission representative** provided information on the outcome of the Senior Official Meeting of the EU-Libya Cooperation Agenda, held in Brussels on 15 February 2011.

12. EU-Turkey

The **Chair** and the **Commission representative** provided information on the outcome of the JHA Council held on 24 February 2011, in relation to the negotiations of a readmission agreement with Turkey.

13. Information by the Commission on its Communication on the evaluation of the readmission policy

The **Commission representative** provided information on the on the above Communication, recently released (7044/11 MIGR 35), on which the Group had an exchange of views.

14. AOB

- **EU-ACP**

The **Commission representative** provided information on the outcome of the third meeting of the EU-ACP Dialogue, held in Brussels on 18 February.

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The Söderköping Process

What is the Söderköping Process and when did it start?

The Söderköping Process was launched during the first Swedish EU Presidency in 2001 to respond to the challenges of the EU enlargement eastwards, and to promote better cooperation on asylum and migration related issues among the countries situated along the eastern border of future EU Member States. Since 2004, the Söderköping Process has specifically focused on sharing experiences on asylum, protection, migration and border management issues between Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Sweden on the one hand, and Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine on the other. The initiative was named „The Söderköping Process” after the town of Söderköping in Sweden where the first meeting was held.

The Söderköping Process is currently funded by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In 2010, the Process was transformed from a partner led to a government-led cooperation, with one year rotating Chairmanship. Hungary held the first Chair in 2010 and Sweden was elected Chair for 2011 during the High Level Meeting held in Budapest in December 2010.

The Process is coordinated by a network of National Coordinators from respective participating country and a Secretariat operated by the Swedish Migration Board, which works to facilitate and enhance intergovernmental cooperation, information-sharing and contacts between the EU Member States and the current beneficiary countries Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

Who are the participants of Söderköping Process?

The Process started in 2001 with coordination meetings between senior officials from the Republic of Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine and the project partners IOM, the Swedish Migration Board and the UNHCR. In 2002 Latvia and Moldova joined the Process as full-fledged members. Hungary, the Slovak Republic and Romania joined the Process in 2003. In December 2010 Sweden also formally joined the Process, undertaking the role of Chairmanship for the year 2011.

In 2009, the participating countries in the Söderköping Process took the strategic decision to extend the Process and to welcome Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to the Process. This decision was reiterated at the High Level Meeting held in Budapest in December 2010.

What is the Söderköping Process’ structure?

An effective coordination and information sharing mechanism is managed by all governments involved and the Chair, the National Coordinators, and the Secretariat have their clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The work within the Söderköping Process is based on a Strategy for the Future developed and agreed upon in October 2008 by all participating governments and UNHCR, IOM and SMB. National Coordinators in all participating states ensure the successful implementation.

What are the objectives of the Söderköping Process?

From the beginning, the main goal of the Söderköping Process has been to assist with aligning to international standards asylum, migration and border management related policies, as well as legislation and practices, of Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. This has been done through the sharing of best practices and lessons learned in reforming national asylum and migration management systems to align with the EU *acquis*. The Söderköping Process has a vast experience in facilitating policy dialogue and the exchange of information on a wide array of migration and asylum issues between the participating states. The Process acts as a comprehensive information sharing mechanism between Governments through the Söderköping Process web portal (in English and Russian), which facilitates the sharing of statistics, migration trends, policy developments, research and legislation, as well as access to key EU policy documents, EU directives and best practices.

The purpose of the current cooperation within the Söderköping Process is to:

1. maintain the transformed, government-led Söderköping Process with the support of all partner organizations;
2. further enhance the existing Network of National Coordinators and strengthen coordination and information sharing mechanisms internally in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine and the countries joining the Process;
3. facilitate direct contacts between governments, including organizing bilateral meetings, setting agendas, providing resources and information and briefing notes;
4. maintain dialogue/cooperation between Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine and the countries joining the Process in order to deepen the existing cooperation and promote policy coherence;
5. enhance information sharing mechanisms between governments through the Söderköping Process web-portal, including sharing of statistics, migration trends, policy developments, legislation, EU policy documents and legal instruments made available in Russian in order to strengthen and further promote a sustainable and equitable system for asylum seekers and migrants;
6. carry out trainings on asylum, migration and border management issues.

What are the main activities of the Söderköping Process?

Bilateral and multilateral dialogue at the expert/practitioner level is coordinated to allow asylum, migration and border guard officials and NGOs to work with their counterparts in other countries on a specific set of issues.

The main activities of the Process are:

1. Meetings of the National Coordinators (as necessary, two or three times per year)
2. High Level Meeting (annual)
3. Training and information sharing, seminars and workshops on thematic issues

The planned activities for the first six months of 2011 are two National Coordinators Meetings held back-to-back with thematic seminars. The proposed topics for the thematic seminars are readmission/return/reintegration and legal migration/labour migration/circular migration. There will also be a workshop on the European Asylum Curriculum (EAC) and the experience from implementing the EAC concept in non EU Member States.

The above mentioned activities and the participation of the partner countries in those activities, such as travel expenses, accommodation etc., are covered by the financing from the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Information sharing mechanisms between governments is maintained through the Söderköping Process web-portal (www.soderkoping.org.ua), sharing of statistics, migration trends, policy developments, legislation in English and in Russian.

Overall, the thematic focuses of the actions are:

- small seminars and workshops on asylum and migration issues to be determined by the countries involved in the Söderköping Process;
- analysis of migration trends, data/statistics collection including asylum and migration statistics;
- compiling and disseminating information related to the Eastern Partnership, Regional Protection Programmes, Mobility Partnerships, the Eastern Neighbourhood Policy involving and informing Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine about the ongoing dialogue in the EU Member States on asylum and migration.

What are the achievements of the Söderköping Process?

The major achievement of the Process is the creation of a forum for discussion on common asylum, migration and border management issues among governments and between governments and civil society. As recognized and reiterated by the participating governments, the Söderköping Process serves as a unique instrument for bilateral and multilateral cooperation in areas of common concern and has, in the past few years become one of the central fora where the Border Guard Services, Ministries of Interior and Migration Services interact, share information, data, best practices and engage in dialogue. As acknowledged in statements made by the participating countries, the meeting and thematic workshops, coupled with information sharing initiatives such as the website, statistics and legislative databases have in fact strengthened the cooperation mechanisms available to all participating countries.

Several important initiatives, projects and concepts have also been “born” through the Söderköping Process, such as the European Asylum Curriculum (EAC), which will be transferred and incorporated into the future European Asylum Support Office, and the project concerning local integration of refugees in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, which is currently funded by the EU.

The particular added value of the Söderköping Process is two folded since it focuses both on migration and asylum. It also brings together experienced practitioners from governments, various bodies of the EU, as well as international agencies and civil society, to work cooperatively and concertedly in developing and improving migration management and asylum systems in the region. There remains a common interest of all participating countries in cooperating, both bilaterally and regionally within the Söderköping Process.

The future of the Söderköping Process – a possible incorporation of the Process into the Eastern Partnership?

Since the launch of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in May 2009 in Prague, significant steps have been taken in its implementation. Relations between the European Union and the partner countries have deepened and developed, with EU integration resting firmly at the core. The multilateral dimension of the EaP has also progressed with several important activities launched. One area covered by the multilateral dimension of the EaP, underlined by EU Member States and partners as being of great importance but which remains to be developed, is migration and mobility in a broad sense.

At present, the multilateral platform on democracy, good governance and stability, (platform 1), which is mandated to cover questions linked to migration, is focusing its work on anti-corruption, reform of the judiciary, public administration reform and integrated border management. The platform has however agreed that *“a multilateral exchange of views and best practices on migration policy, including conditions for secure and well-managed mobility, bearing in mind the long-term goal of visa-free travel and a common readmission area”* is one of its core objectives.

In 2009, the participating countries in the Söderköping Process decided to work towards integrating the Söderköping Process into the Eastern Partnership. The Söderköping Process offers an existing and well functioning comprehensive concept that could be placed under the aegis of the multilateral dimension of the EaP, thus involving all partner countries, EU Member States, the Commission and other relevant EU bodies. This would broaden the migration agenda of the EaP and fill the existing gap in its multilateral dimension. Through the integration of the Söderköping Process into the EaP, important synergies with the Building Migration Partnerships Process and the Budapest Process may also be achieved.

Integrating the Söderköping Process into the EaP and placing it under the auspices of multilateral platform 1 would consequently transform the Process from a government-led process involving the partner countries and some EU Member States, to a multilateral format for cooperation on the broader migration agenda, encompassing all actors participating in the work of EaP platform 1.

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