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To: Delegations

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Subject: EU approach to forced displacement and development
- Council conclusions (12 May 2016)

1. Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on the EU approach to forced displacement and development, as adopted by the Council at its 3462nd meeting held on 12 May 2016.

Council conclusions on the EU approach to forced displacement and development

1. Globally, more than 60 million people – refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) – are forcibly displaced because of conflict, violence, and human rights violations. In light of the global refugee and migration crisis also affecting Europe, this is a major source of concern for the Council. Climate change, natural and man-made disasters, as well as a lack of development possibilities or human security pose additional challenges in this respect. The Council recalls that 86% of the world’s refugees live in developing regions and that least developed countries (LDCs) host 25% of the global total. The Council reiterates its commitment to work towards peaceful solutions to conflict and durable and dignified solutions for refugees and IDPs, including safe voluntary return, as well as the importance of prevention and capacity building as cornerstones for resilience.
2. The Council recalls its conclusions (19 July 2013) on the 2013 High level Dialogue on Migration and Development and on broadening the development-migration nexus¹ as well as its December 2014 conclusions on Migration in EU development cooperation² which called for "a coherent and coordinated development approach towards refugees and IDP issues and ensuring appropriate funding responses". This demand was reiterated during the Council meeting on 26 May 2015.
3. The Council stresses the need to take urgent and decisive policy action in dealing with protracted displacement situations and therefore welcomes the Commission Communication "Lives in Dignity: from Aid-Dependence to Self-Reliance. Forced Displacement and Development".

¹ 12415/13.

² 16901/14.

4. The Council acknowledges that forced displacement has a severe impact not only on displaced individuals and their families, but also on host countries and communities. The humanitarian system alone cannot address the growing and evolving needs of the forcibly displaced and of the countries and communities hosting them, especially as more crises become protracted. Forced displacement is a political, human rights, security, developmental and economic challenge, compounded by smuggling, trafficking and exploitation. It should be addressed from a needs-based perspective, underpinned by a rights-based approach encompassing all human rights, through long-term development support involving as a rule development actors, including local ones, from the early stages, whenever possible, and throughout a crisis, thus complementing the humanitarian approach in a coordinated and coherent manner, supported by political dialogue. The goal should be to work towards sustainable global and local solutions for displaced persons, by addressing root causes and combatting the protracted nature of forced displacement, to improve their lives and move from aid dependence to self-reliance. On the other hand, host countries and communities should receive adequate and sustained support, while maximising the benefits that displaced persons can bring. A stronger strategic and operational link between development and humanitarian approaches should seek to establish a framework for broad partnerships that improve protection and create durable social and economic opportunities, including education at all levels, for forcibly displaced persons and their host communities, taking into account the priorities, financial circumstances and needs of countries and communities that are hosting forcibly displaced persons.

A coherent, development-led approach to forced displacement

5. The Council welcomes the approach and guiding principles, which recognise the potential of refugees' and IDPs to actively contribute to and participate in the economy and society of host countries and communities until safe return is possible. The Council is of the view that host governments should be supported in adopting and implementing national legal systems and policies that are in line with international standards and conducive to self-reliance of displaced persons, and by doing so safeguarding their rights and human dignity. The EU will work together with host governments and local authorities in gradually implementing plans and policies for the socio-economic inclusion of forcibly displaced persons, within the framework of local and national development plans. Access to labour markets, education and services are of crucial importance in this regard. This work should be based on partnerships with all development actors, including diasporas. The involvement of local civil society and the private sector, e.g. through public-private partnerships, is crucial to offer much-needed services and opportunities for employment, business and investment for both forcibly displaced persons and their host communities. These efforts should be underpinned by solidarity, local ownership, sustainability, respect for human rights and rooted in concrete economic and social evidence of all the impacts and implications of hosting refugees or IDPs.

6. The Council is committed to and calls upon the EU and its Member States as well as international actors to systematically include forcibly displaced persons and their host communities in the design, programming and implementation of international cooperation and assistance interventions in a comprehensive manner. Interventions in support of sustainable solutions must be context-specific and address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of the forcibly displaced, beyond legal status. The early engagement and close coordination of political and development actors at the outset of a crisis should be the rule, to complement and build on the humanitarian actors' emergency and early recovery interventions, in full respect of international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights law. This is in line with the commitment to "leave no one behind", enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by empowering the most vulnerable, including refugees and IDPs. Special attention should be paid to women, youth and children, as well as to vulnerable categories including persons with disabilities. In this regard, education is of crucial importance as part of a long-term perspective.
7. The Council acknowledges that solid evidence, and shared development and humanitarian situational assessments, reliable data and comprehensive analysis of refugee and migration flows, including impacts on host communities, are crucial to formulate evidence-based and results-oriented policies. To improve this, the Commission Services and the Member States will work together with all relevant actors.
8. The more coherent approach aims to enhance the appropriateness, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of EU assistance provided in protracted displacement situations – complementing in a coordinated way humanitarian assistance to meet acute and mid-term needs and employing development approaches that include longer-term perspectives and preserve the dignity and foster the self-reliance of the displaced and the resilience of the host communities and countries alike, while fully respecting the humanitarian principles as the basis of humanitarian assistance.

Next steps and the way forward

9. The Council acknowledges that – as part of the European Agenda on Migration – major new programmatic and funding tools that link immediate relief to mid- and long- term support for both the displaced and their hosts are being developed. These include among others dedicated EU Trust Funds, the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, the forthcoming compacts with host countries, such as Jordan and Lebanon, and Regional Development and Protection Programmes (RDPP) in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and the North of Africa. In this context, the Council looks forward to forthcoming reviews, including of financing instruments, to guide EU programming, so as to better address root causes in an appropriate manner and to improve long term perspectives for host communities, refugees, IDPs, as well as voluntary returnees. To that end, the Council calls upon the Commission Services and the EEAS to strengthen the cooperation with partner countries in implementing relevant programmes, in compliance with international agreements.

10. The EU is committed to providing a policy framework for a more efficient, context-specific and dignified response to global forced displacement and maximise the impact of EU support to refugees and IDPs, in line with the European Agenda on Migration, with particular emphasis on protracted displacement as a long-term development challenge. Combatting violence against women should be a priority. Efforts should build on what host countries, international organisations and civil society organisations are already doing in order to offer an integrated package of measures: education, basic services, livelihoods, decent work opportunities, private sector instruments, trade and specific attention for the protection, in particular of children, and full participation of the displaced with particular attention for the most vulnerable groups. This will require considerable efforts by the EU and the full cooperation of these countries in question, but these are conditions that the EU and Member States, also with the support of international financial institutions (IFIs), including the European Investment Bank, can help create through innovative and effective development cooperation, economic assistance and investment in infrastructure and businesses, as well as political dialogue and action.

11. The Council welcomes the UN-led World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, including the Agenda for Humanity presented in the UNSG report, and the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Refugees and Migrants to take place in September 2016 as an opportunity for political, developmental and humanitarian actors to commit to a more coherent and holistic global approach to forced displacement, as part of the broader migration agenda.

 12. The Council calls upon the Commission Services, the EEAS and the Member States to implement the new policy framework to forced displacement by taking the necessary political, policy, legal and financial steps, and provide a concrete action and results-oriented follow-up to it. The Council also calls upon the Commission Services and the EEAS to regularly report, starting in 2016, to the Council on the actions taken and the state of play of the implementation, and to promote further engagement of stakeholders.
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