



Rabat Process
Euro-African Dialogue on
Migration and Development

High Level Thematic Meeting

**"Cooperation between countries of origin,
transit and destination in the field of border
management"**

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المملكة المغربية
Royaume du Maroc



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Introduction

High Level Thematic Meeting on Cooperation in Border Management:

- Co-chaired by Spain and Morocco;
- Echoing the priorities of [Area 4 of the Marrakech Action Plan 2018-2020 on Irregular Migration, Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking](#);
- The meeting is a continuation of the technical meeting on border management, co-chaired by Spain and Morocco, which had taken place in Madrid in July 2019 ;
- The meeting focused on the exchange of good practices and was action-oriented ;
- The meeting attracted a diverse audience of 70 participants, from 26 European and African countries.

Objectives of the meeting:

- Inform participants of the latest developments in border management in the region since the last meeting in 2019 ;
- Assess the main challenges of common interest to the Rabat Process partner countries where cooperation could be further strengthened at the regional level;
- Discuss and propose strategies for joint actions and best practices that would allow for a strengthening of regional cooperation in terms of prevention of irregular migration and fight against migrant smuggling networks, but also to promote the legal movement of people and goods;
- Propose initiatives to strengthen the protection of human rights as a priority in the external action of the Rabat Process countries.

Expected results of the meeting:

- Identification or confirmation of challenges of common interest in border management among Rabat Process partner countries - balanced approach between security and human development aspects;
- Definition of common strategic objectives and related concrete actions, at the regional and sub-regional levels, to prevent irregular migration and encourage the legal crossing of borders by people and goods;
- List of concrete actions related to good practices in integrated border management that can be considered in the framework of regional cooperation to improve border management, control migration flows and support local/regional trade;
- The development of good practices that would allow States, through triangular operational cooperation actions, to obtain visible results in the medium and long term.

This document provides an overview of the main **conclusions of the meeting**, as well as **good practices, challenges and recommendations** related to border management cooperation.

• High Level opening Ceremony

The high-level opening ceremony was attended by Ms. Angeles Moreno Bau, Secretary of State for External and Global Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, Mr. Wali Khalid Zerouali, Director of Migration and Border Surveillance at the Ministry of Interior, and Ms. Monique Pariat, Director General of Migration and Home Affairs at the European Commission.

During the opening ceremony, the speakers agreed that the Rabat Process has, since its creation in 2006, consistently promoted a global **approach based on shared responsibility between countries of departure, transit and destination**. This Dialogue remains a useful and relevant platform for exchange in the current migration context.

It was recalled that it was necessary to strengthen coordination in border management between countries of departure, transit and destination, but also to seek **structural solutions** to combat irregular migration and smuggling networks. The corollaries to the joint fight against irregular migration and smuggling networks are the **promotion of safe, orderly and regular migration and prevention** based on cooperation between countries.

- **Border cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination in the field of border management**

Migration and border management in countries of origin, transit and destination: state of play and future challenges

During this session, speakers emphasized the following points:

- Criminal networks are financially dynamic, experienced in the use of new technologies, and operate in the context of a constantly evolving hybrid crime (terrorism, human trafficking, drug trafficking, etc.);
- No state is able to meet these challenges alone;
- It is necessary to strengthen coordination and cooperation in the field of border management between countries of departure, transit and destination and to strengthen the capacities of security forces in charge of fighting irregular migration and trafficking networks;
- The joint fight against irregular migration and smuggling networks also depends on the promotion of safe, orderly and regular migration and the establishment of borders that are not only more secure but also open for legal travel and trade;
- It was recalled that it is important to focus on identifying preventive measures to anticipate and counteract the activities of criminal networks as early as possible, including the monitoring of social networks by border guards and the police.

Spanish policy implementation to address the challenges of migration

The Spanish policy is based on **three pillars**: 1) Upstream prevention: capacity building of security forces (financial support), technical assistance and operational projects, training of police forces; 2) Fight against migrant smuggling networks and border control: joint patrols (land, sea, air), Joint Investigation Teams (JITs), information exchange networks; 3) Voluntary and forced return

Spain cooperates with **Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Guinea and Senegal** through the provision of operational material (police equipment, vehicles, computers, etc.), financial support and training.

Good practices in border management and security and the fight against irregular migration in Morocco and The Gambia

- **Morocco** has put in place (1) advanced technological solutions, (2) various security equipment (explosives and narcotics detectors, radiation detectors, metal detectors, X-ray scanners, body scanners) to equip border posts, (3) inter-agency platforms to improve cooperation in border management, and (4) training for police officers.

The modernization of cross-border controls, using biometrics and automated integration of traveler data, has made it possible to improve the detection of document fraud, increase the volume of hard drug seizures, fight irregular migration more effectively at border crossings, and seize foreign currency (foreign currency being an important component of money laundering), while also reducing the burden on border police officers, especially in terms of data entry.

- **The Gambia** has implemented several **good practices**: (1) the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (NCM), as the coordinating body for all migration issues, is a key element in the fight against irregular migration; (2) inter-agency coordination committees at nine land border crossings to create synergy among the various border actors. The Gambia has identified several **gaps and challenges**: insufficient resources for border patrols, outdated legal frameworks (immigration law and lack of a law on

combating migrant smuggling), inadequate human resources (equipment for sea and land patrols), and limited operational capacity (intelligence gathering and investigations).

The central issue of operational information exchange

During this discussion, **several good practices were identified:**

- Spain has a coordinating authority for operations against irregular immigration in the Canary Islands, which centralizes the coordination and monitoring of all actions related to irregular immigration, transfers the corresponding information, and to some extent prevents the departure of migrant boats from the countries of origin;
- The establishment of joint investigation teams and joint surveillance patrols (e.g. between Spain and Mauritania and between Spain and Morocco);
- Mauritania has created a risk analysis cell with Frontex with a liaison officer;
- Moroccan customs is a highly computerized administration. The Automated Networked Customs Base (ANCB) tracks the movement of people, goods, and vehicles. All systems are computerized and include artificial intelligence systems that allow for data exchange with most partners and accelerate border procedures.

Several courses of action and recommendations were mentioned:

- It would be relevant to network information at the regional level through an early warning mechanism on traffic networks along the migration routes.
- Given the financial vitality and structuring of criminal networks, it is necessary for African countries to have technical and financial support to strengthen their cooperation.

The Joint Investigation Team (JIT) in Niger

The Joint Investigation Team (JIT) in Niger was established to combat criminal networks involved in irregular immigration, human trafficking, and document and identity fraud. Border control issues in Niger are central given that it is a transit country that borders 7 countries and faces numerous threats at its borders (terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, cattle rustling, etc.).

This project has made it possible to 1) arrest targets of high strategic value, 2) dismantle numerous smuggling networks at the national and international levels, 3) fight corruption, 4) create a database, 5) transmit operational and strategic information to the EU, 6) train DST personnel in Niger, 7) and provide substantial technical resources.

• Operational cooperation in border management

This session was organized around two working groups that focused on 1) good practices in operational cooperation on border management and 2) exchange and sharing of information in the fields of migration and border management. **The objective was to network the good practices of the different countries present.**

Good practices: operational cooperation in border management

- Extend the concept of operational cooperation to all aspects of border relations: customs, health, environmental protection, etc.
- Develop joint patrols and encourage neighboring states to set up joint police, customs and gendarmerie offices;
- Include border communities in information exchange mechanisms on irregular migration;
- Increase the level of intervention and capacity building of police/gendarmerie/customs/water and forestry services contributing to joint border security;

- Develop training courses based on the sharing of experiences in order to contribute to the improvement and upgrading of the border agents of the countries concerned;
- Use existing entities and resources in the area of security and in other areas to strengthen regional cooperation: WAPCC, ECOWAS, CEMAC, WAPIS, etc.

Good practices: exchange and sharing of information in the fields of migration and border management

- The mechanisms mentioned above were also considered as a basis for information exchange (joint offices, joint patrols, etc.);
- Use existing agreements to exchange or share information at the regional and/or bilateral level;
- Support and facilitate the flow of information from the local level to headquarters to improve monitoring of activities and situational awareness at the borders;
- Implement and develop joint training for border management agencies;
- Work to strengthen risk analysis units and network them to share their products (prevention aspects, early warning, targeting and control orientation);
- Use mobile border control means (mobile PCA and mobile identification stations) for information collection and subsequent exploitation;
- In the long term, support the implementation of the digitization of civil registers, electrification of priority border control posts, etc.

• Good practices in integrated border management

Integrated border management in practice

The EU integrated border management strategy implemented by Frontex

The EU Integrated Border Management Strategy (EUIBM) is in constant evolution. It is based on 12 thematic strategic components based on 3 global components: 1) respect for fundamental rights, 2) education and training of border personnel, 3) research and innovation (advanced technologies).

Frontex is committed to research and innovation and has a large network of academic partnerships (research institutes) to share knowledge and evolve solutions.

The European agency also has a network of liaison officers deployed in partner countries to better understand the problems faced by the latter and to be able to provide support where and when needed.

Some examples of integrated border management

- **Germany** has several instruments oriented towards border management: 1) technical cooperation for security services responsible for border management, 2) control of external borders using an advanced passenger information system (APIS), 3) cooperation with third countries in removal measures.
Germany has a number of good practices in place, including investment in human resources and technical assistance to prevent future problems (e.g., an innovative project with a university in Germany to try to detect the behavior of people).
- **Lebanon** has a people-centered strategy that aims to: 1) strengthen border governance by supporting Lebanon's commitment to the implementation of the national integrated border management strategy, 2) strengthen coordination between security agencies and build their capacity at the operational level, 3) contribute to border security and stability by involving communities that host large numbers of IDPs. Several results have been achieved, such as the Action Plan for the implementation of the integrated border management strategy, a maritime working group, the establishment of a gender unit, etc.

Operational cooperation for the prevention of irregular migration between Spain and Senegal

Operational cooperation in the prevention of irregular migration between Senegal and Spain in the framework of the Joint Operational Partnership (JOP)

Bilateral cooperation between Spain and Senegal has been based on solid agreements and conventions since 2006. It is structured around four axes: 1) joint patrols, 2) information exchange and mutual assistance in investigations, 3) training, internships and mentoring, 4) support in intelligence gathering.

Good Practices :

- Anti-smuggling unit in Senegal able to act autonomously
- Joint patrols between Spain and Senegal
- Senegalese liaison officer in the Canary Islands
- Mentoring actions by Spain in the framework of the Joint Operational Partnership (JOP)

Challenges:

- Establish an intelligence sharing platform between the two countries
- Rethinking the continuation of operational cooperation in a context of Frontex presence
- Decentralize the units fighting irregular migration
- Deconstruct the myth of the European El Dorado by engaging communities and offering sustainable alternatives to fix young people in their homeland
- Promote legal migration (Spain-Senegal agreement on circular migration)
- Promote a policy of voluntary return

Recommendations :

- Ensure permanence and continuity in border control and surveillance
- Strengthen the means of aerial surveillance and acquire more suitable aquatic means
- Continue mentoring, internships and training
- Initiate training and investigations adapted to current realities (digital investigation techniques, cyber patrols)
- Systematize the seizure and confiscation of assets resulting from the illicit activities of traffickers
- Sign complementary agreements

This session highlighted the importance of finding **structural solutions** in the fight against irregular migration. It is not only a question of dismantling trafficking networks, but also of giving candidates for migration reasons to want to stay in their countries of origin and not to undertake an often dangerous migratory path. To do this, the focus must be on three things:

- **The implementation of development policies and programs** in the countries of departure: revitalize less attractive regions, enhance the value of local work, offer interesting professional opportunities with attractive prospects for the future and evolution, show that professional success and social ascension can be achieved in the country.
- **Prevention and the fight against misinformation:** demystify the European El Dorado for young people and families, monitor social networks, which are the recruiting ground for traffickers, highlight the risks of irregular migration, the role of members of the diaspora.
- **Promote legal migration and circular migration:** facilitate the delivery of visas and propose work and exchange programs.

• Future challenges

Next steps and recommendations for the future

- Adopt a comprehensive approach to take into account both operational and structural aspects (development issues in countries of departure);
- Continue to work jointly between countries of origin, transit and destination to effectively address the challenges of irregular migration and integrated border management, including through information sharing;
- To ensure the support of local and municipal authorities and local communities in the collection of information;
- Share experiences at the regional level with other countries;
- Focus on the implementation of a quality control mechanism;
- Use advanced technology in border management;
- Stimulate prevention through training and awareness workshops;
- Provide support and protection to vulnerable people;
- - Ensure operational follow-up to this meeting within the framework of the Rabat Process. Morocco, which will hold the chairmanship of the Dialogue starting in 2023, would like to see concrete actions taken in the areas of combating irregular migration and border management.

Analysis of Meeting participation*

- The event attracted a diverse audience of 70 participants from 26 countries.
- The thematic meeting met the expectations of participants to be informed of the latest developments in border management in the region, to assess common challenges among partner countries, and to discuss and propose strategies for joint actions.
- However, some participants felt that further discussions are still needed to advance the dialogue and translate the discussions and recommendations into concrete actions on the ground.
- Participants highlighted a few recommendations for the future: 1) give greater emphasis to inter-African cooperation on border management (South-South cooperation), 2) focus on structural solutions to irregular migration, and 3) strengthen trust and collaboration between countries sharing a common border.
- The event was widely reported on Twitter, including by Angeles Moreno Bau, Secretary of State for External and Global Affairs and representatives of the Spanish government.

* This analysis is based on the responses provided by participants to the evaluation forms.