



Marrakesh Political Declaration

WE, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, of the Interior, of Integration, in charge of Migration and high representatives of the following countries: AUSTRIA, BELGIUM, BENIN, BULGARIA, BURKINA FASO, CABO VERDE, CAMEROON, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, CHAD, CONGO, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, CROATIA, CYPRUS, CZECH REPUBLIC, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, DENMARK, EQUATORIAL GUINEA, ESTONIA, FINLAND, FRANCE, GABON, GAMBIA, GERMANY, GHANA, GREECE, GUINEA, GUINEA-BISSAU, IRELAND, ITALY, LATVIA, LIBERIA, LITHUANIA, LUXEMBOURG, MALI, MALTA, MAURITANIA, MOROCCO, NETHERLANDS, NIGER, NIGERIA, NORWAY, POLAND, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA, SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE, SENEGAL, SIERRA LEONE, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND, TOGO, TUNISIA and UNITED KINGDOM; High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship; and high representatives of the Economic Community of West African States Commission ; and Algeria and Libya as observer countries;

MEETING the 2nd May 2018 in Marrakesh, at the invitation of the Kingdom of Morocco;

ACKNOWLEDGING the growing relevance of migration issues at the global level in general, and in Euro-African and Intra-African relations in particular, as well as the need to identify adapted and coordinated responses for the management of migration flows in all their aspects;

RECALLING the commitments made by the Rabat Process partners in the framework of the 2006 Joint Africa-EU Declaration on Migration and Development, the 2014 Africa-EU Declaration on Migration and Mobility, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations in 2015 in which States pledged to “*leave no-one behind*”, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants adopted the 19th September 2016 by the United Nations, the United Nations Declaration of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration of 2013, and the Political Declaration of the 5th African Union – European Union Summit of 2017 ;

REAFFIRMING the commitments made by the Rabat Process partners at the Valletta Summit on Migration in November 2015 and the Senior Officials’ Meeting of Valletta in February 2017, as well as their adherence to the principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility in the joint management of migration issues in full respect of human rights;

REITERATING the commitment of the Rabat Process partners to the effective implementation of the Valletta Joint Action Plan (JVAP);

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the mandate given to the Rabat and Khartoum Processes to monitor the JVAP, as well as the mapping exercise already conducted, to ensure its follow-up, and **COMMENDING** the efforts made to implement the technical instrument for the long-term monitoring of the JVAP;

RECALLING the commitments made by the Rabat Process partners at the Ministerial Conferences in 2006, 2008, 2011 and 2014, and the principles contained in the 2011 Dakar Declaration (*an operational and coherent dialogue, a flexible and balanced approach, committed partners and shared responsibility*);



RECOGNISING the progress achieved within the framework of the different plans and strategies of the Rabat Process and taking into account the lessons learnt from the analyses carried out at the end of the Rome Programme 2014-2017;

NOTING the value of the technical expertise and experience of external observers such as international organisations working in the field of migration and asylum, civil society actors, members of the diaspora and academic representatives, in enriching and operationalising the dialogue; **CALLING** for the strengthening of cooperation with the latter through increased consultations;

CONSCIOUS of the driving force of the Rabat Process in identifying common political priorities for migration and asylum issues between Africa and Europe, and its contribution to the formulation and implementation of migration strategies;

ENDEAVOURING to ensure coherence with the implementation instruments which have emerged since 2014 and which redefine the partnership framework, **AVOIDING** duplication of actions being undertaken in this respect and **ENSURING** complementarity of interventions;

ADOPT the Marrakesh Programme for 2018-2020, which comprises the present Political Declaration as well as the targeted, operational Action Plan, and which is based on a regional approach whilst also respecting state sovereignty;

AGREE to align the said Programme with the **five domains** of the JVAP in order to maintain coherence and complementarity with it:

Domain 1: Development benefits of migration and addressing root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement;

Domain 2: Legal migration and mobility;

Domain 3: Protection and asylum;

Domain 4: Prevention of and fight against irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings;

Domain 5: Return, readmission and reintegration;

AGREE equally to effectively implement, in a balanced way, the Action Plan which is thus adopted by incorporating the following cross-cutting priorities:

- 1. A human rights-based approach:** the implemented actions will contribute to fully respecting the human rights and dignity of refugees and migrants, irrespective of their migration status;
- 2. Particular attention will be paid to the issues of gender and the protection of migrants in vulnerable situations including, in particular, women and children;**
- 3. Increased attention to the fight against xenophobia, racism and discrimination:** the partners will undertake efforts to combat these phenomena, and to promote a balanced narrative on migration and diasporas, based on facts and highlighting their positive contribution to the development of societies in countries of origin, transit and destination;

4. **A regional approach:** the identification, formulation and execution of actions will take into account local and regional specificities.
5. **An inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach:** in their interventions, the partners will seek to involve all the actors under the coordination of the national authorities (regional organisations, local authorities, traditional and customary authorities, representatives of civil society and migrant and refugee communities, social partners, the private sector, the media and academia) as well as relevant International Organisations, to ensure coordinated and orderly management of all dimensions of the migratory phenomenon.
6. **Particular attention to the collection, analysis and sharing of disaggregated data:** among the activities envisaged, the partners will endeavour to identify existing initiatives and studies, to share migration data and will undertake, if necessary, specific studies for operational purposes at national or regional levels. The data and information obtained will feed into and contribute to migration policy-making processes;

DECIDE to target concrete actions which reflect the specific added value of the Rabat Process. This resides, notably, in its ability to build networks of technical and political actors, to formulate actions which take regional specificities into account, and to centralise information gathered as a result of their implementation, whilst at the same time respecting geographical balance at all levels;

AGREE to specify the modalities for the implementation of the targeted actions and to use the relevant mechanisms and tools to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Marrakesh Programme for 2018-2020 on a periodic basis in order to improve its scope and impact.

Marrakesh Action Plan 2018-2020

Domain 1: Development benefits of migration and addressing root causes of irregular migration and the phenomenon of displaced persons

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims, in its Goal 10.7, to “Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”.

Since its inception, the Rabat Process has consistently promoted the positive potential of regular migration and the key role of the diaspora for countries of origin, transit and destination. The strengthening of synergies between migration and development constitutes a priority domain and a specific feature of the Rabat Process. The dialogue partners agree to pursue this path and will focus most of their actions on maximising the benefits of regular migration for development, including, as a priority, members of the diaspora in this process.

The Rabat Process partners recognise the multiple root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement. These root causes, most of which are interconnected, need to be increasingly addressed through a wide range of appropriate responses both at policy and operational levels. Taking into account the mixed nature of migration flows, the partners reiterate the commitments made in the Valletta framework to invest in development and the eradication of poverty, to fight the root causes of irregular migration, to support humanitarian aid and development assistance in the countries most affected by the phenomenon of displaced persons, and to address environmental and climate change issues in the most affected regions.

Objective 1: Maximising the positive impact of regular migration for development

Action 1: Identify and share good practices that enable countries to gain better knowledge of the profiles of their diasporas and to adopt or to optimise strategies that promote their economic, social and cultural potential for development, whilst also analysing the potential obstacles to the adoption and optimisation of these good practices.

Action 2: Contribute to reducing the costs of remittances and to facilitating remittances sent by migrants to their countries of origin, in particular by supporting innovative or existing initiatives using the potential offered by digitalisation. The partners might refer, for example, to the work carried out by the African Institute for Remittances and its network of focal points.

Action 3: Promote initiatives that support entrepreneurship and productive investment among young people from the African Diaspora (such as the flagship MEETAfrica programme, developed within the framework of the Rabat Process), and encourage these young people to use their skills for the benefit of their countries of origin.

Objective 2: Achieve a common understanding of the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement in the Rabat Process region

Action 4: Analyse the root causes and make practical recommendations (particularly through the organisation of thematic meetings on this subject) with a view to improving the incorporation of these issues into policy development.

Action 5: Promote a more systematic inclusion of issues related to the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement into socio-economic development strategies and programmes at national level, and into development cooperation programmes, whilst also promoting ownership of existing regional normative frameworks.

Domain 2: Legal migration and mobility

Taking note of the above-mentioned Goal 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Rabat Process partners recognise the need to encourage and to strengthen the pathways to regular migration, based on efficient civil registration systems, and to promote the mobility of certain categories of travellers (in particular, businessmen and businesswomen, young professionals or researchers) between European and North, West and Central African countries.

Objective 3: Promote regular migration and mobility, especially of young people and women, between Europe and North, West and Central Africa, and within these regions

Action 6: Encourage the establishment of exchange networks between vocational training institutes and employment agencies in Europe and Africa, in order to draw full benefit from the skills of young migrants and to adapt technical training to the needs of the labour market. Particular attention will be paid to activities targeting women and youth.

Action 7: In accordance with the national legislative frameworks, promote projects which aim to strengthen the portability of the rights and social protection of regular migrants and their families, for example, through the conclusion and the implementation of appropriate bilateral, regional or international conventions.

Action 8: Identify good practices and success factors which can guide relevant policy development and support inter- and intra-regional mobility, in particular through the analysis of existing studies on circular migration, particularly at regional level.

Objective 4: Encourage facilitation of visa issuing procedures

Action 9: In a spirit of partnership, pursue an open dialogue regarding visa facilitation, in particular through meetings and technical training sessions.

Action 10: Support actions designed to improve the accessibility, efficiency and transparency of the various national systems for visa issuance, including support for the creation of local information structures or the establishment of online information portals.

Domain 3: Protection and asylum

Rabat Process partners reiterate their international commitments in the field of protection and asylum, including those contained in the Valletta Political Declaration, and in particular those aimed at providing protection “to all those entitled to it in accordance with international and regional instruments”. They reaffirm their respect for the dignity of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, and for the protection of their human rights, irrespective of status. The partners encourage countries in their efforts to sign up to and implement existing international conventions on protection, including the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. They also encourage capacity building of national institutions with regards to asylum systems.

Objective 5: Promote measures aiming to strengthen the protection of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons

Action 11: Identify existing cross-border and regional protection initiatives in one of the sub-regions of the dialogue, and propose actions to stakeholders aimed at improving the protection of refugees and forcibly displaced persons. Particular attention will be paid to take into account the most vulnerable people, the best interests of children and the needs of unaccompanied minors.

Action 12: Promote the adoption of local, national and regional action plans aimed at defining procedures for an effective response, especially in the event of massive displacements of people.

Objective 6: Promote the integration of refugees and forcibly displaced persons into host communities

Action 13: Promote the integration of refugees and forcibly displaced persons through the establishment of awareness-raising campaigns aimed, on the one hand, at local communities and on the other hand, at refugees and asylum seekers, covering their rights and obligations in host countries.

Action 14: Share experiences and good practices which promote access to work and which allow people benefitting from international protection to become more self-reliant.

Domain 4: Prevention of and fight against irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings

The Rabat Process partners reiterate their commitment to international obligations relating to the prevention and fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, which are two serious forms of organised crime under international law (the 2000 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the additional United Nations protocols against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea, and aimed to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children).

In accordance with the Valletta Political Declaration, the partners encourage the stepping-up of efforts to prevent and combat these phenomena, both in Europe and Africa, through various instruments. Within this framework, the search for alternatives to the informal economy stemming

from the illicit smuggling of migrants and the trafficking of human beings, as well as awareness-raising measures, are particularly encouraged.

The partners recognise the contribution of regional and international organisations and civil society organisations in this domain. The added value of the Rabat Process lies, *inter alia*, in its ability to connect the actors concerned by these two phenomena, in order to promote mutual learning and to improve cooperation.

Objective 7: Build the capacities of public institutions with competency in the areas of integrated border management, and the prevention and fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings

Action 15: Improve the detection capabilities of national authorities with regard to smuggling of migrants and persons in need of international protection, trafficking in human beings, as well as in the area of integrated border management and control.

Action 16: Strengthen judicial and police cooperation at bilateral, inter- and intra-regional and international levels regarding the exchange of information, paying particular attention to financial investigations.

Action 17: Continue and accompany efforts designed to develop and to implement appropriate legislative and institutional frameworks at both national and regional levels, in accordance with the 2000 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the relevant additional Protocols against the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings.

Objective 8: Improve the protection of migrants and persons in need of international protection who have been smuggled, and victims of trafficking in human beings

Action 18: Facilitate the sharing of good practices in relation to awareness-raising and information on the risks of irregular migration and trafficking in human beings, targeting, in particular, children and women, and involving all stakeholders (the State, the diaspora, the media, social networks, civil society, international organisations and the private sector).

Action 19: Formulate concrete responses regarding the protection and assistance of people affected by smuggling and victims of trafficking in human beings, particular women and girls (reception structures, legal advice, social, psychosocial and health services, interpretation, reintegration, etc.) and promote their inclusion into national, regional and sub regional initiatives and policies.

Domain 5: Return, readmission and reintegration

The Rabat Process partners reiterate their adherence to obligations under international law in the area of return and readmission and recall the importance of sustainable reintegration. They reiterate their support for the principle of *non-refoulement* and agree to give preference to voluntary return. They recall that policies in the area of return and readmission are the shared responsibility of States, and that they should be efficient, transparent and carried with full respect for the human rights, security and dignity of migrants.

The partners of the Rabat Process applaud the joint progress achieved through the political dialogues which have been initiated in this domain. It is important that these efforts are pursued and that this dialogue is translated into action, leading to strengthened cooperation and more efficient return and readmission.

Objective 9: Strengthen the capacities of the competent authorities in order to improve and ensure the identification processes and the issuing of travel documents.

Action 20: Exchange best practices related to return, readmission and reintegration at national, regional and cross-border levels (in particular through regional consultations).

Action 21: Promote the use of innovative identification techniques. The thematic meeting on return, readmission and reintegration organised in Brussels in 2016 proposed, among other things, the use of videoconferencing for identification or pre-identification, more systematic use of fingerprints, or recourse to joint actions for complex cases. Depending on the needs, provide support (technical assistance, peer support or training) to a specific group of countries in order to help them put these techniques in place.

Objective 10: Encourage programmes that ensure the safe return and sustainable reintegration of migrants, in full respect of their rights and dignity

Action 22: Organise peer-to-peer meetings between European and African cities, and with other competent authorities, to enable mutual learning in migration management, including sustainable return, building on existing networks (such as the *City-to-City* initiative) and capitalising upon their achievements.

Action 23: Strengthen assisted return programmes and promote actions aimed at accompanying and including all returned migrants in development policies and programmes at local level.