



Rabat Process Newsletter, Special Edition - April 2017

This is the first edition of the Rabat Process Newsletter which will be issued quarterly and will provide up-to-date information on the dialogue. This special issue looks back at the recent Senior Officials Meeting which was held on 8-9 February in Malta to take stock of the state of play of the implementation of the Joint Valletta Action Plan.

Editorial

The Valletta Senior Official Meeting (SOM) held last February in Malta marked a crucial step out of the general doom and gloom of the political debate on the so-called migrant crisis.

The agenda focused on the monitoring of the Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP), launched in November 2015 as a concrete solution to the sharp increase of refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants towards the Mediterranean route. At that time, the unacceptable loss of life in the desert or at sea, urged leaders from a wide range of European and African States to develop a partnership on migration based on an integrated approach that is at the basis of the JVAP.

As a result of a strong and concerted political will both, African and European institutions agreed on including in this operational document five priority points:

- Development benefits of migration and addressing root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement;
- Legal migration and mobility;
- Protection and asylum
- Prevention of and fight against irregular immigration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings;
- Return, readmission and reintegration.

At the beginning of its second year of implementation, the Rabat and the Khartoum processes

presented in Malta two analysis reports to provide an overview of the major achievements and challenges under the five priority points. In particular, both processes focused on the monitoring of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa that is the financial tool supporting the implementation of the JVAP.

Both reports stressed the importance of embracing a long-term vision to respond to the migration crisis and underlined that the dialogue frameworks serve suitable exchange platform on the JVAP priorities. While the Khartoum Process Analysis Report focused more on the necessity to support initiatives designed to tackle the root causes of migration; the Rabat Process Analysis Report underlined the positive impact of the JVAP in putting migration and development at the core of the national, regional and international political agendas.

However, throughout the discussions in Valletta some criticism was raised in relation to the *modus operandi* and the cooperation process established so far. Specifically, African partners called for a closer involvement in the operational framework of actions implemented under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. In this regard, the consultation held by the African Union in collaboration with the Arab Republic of Egypt in 2016 is a clear signal that African leaders are strengthening their position on the issues discussed in the Valletta meeting in 2015 and are ready to play a major role.

In this light, the summit organised last February was a unique occasion for all partners to open a discussion on such sensitive and politicised topics. Although the path towards the full implementation of the JVAP is still long and slippery, the commitment shown by leaders is an encouraging step towards more solid results. Many pending questions are likely to be solved in the following year when a follow-up Senior Official Meeting is planned in Addis-Abeba.

Although the human tragedy of the migration crisis is urging a prompt response, it is paramount to remember that the long path to reach political and policy consensus is the only way to reach a durable and shared solution to this international phenomenon. With this view, ICMPD, through the migration dialogues, is supporting State partners to find common grounds for discussions.

Luis Gouveia – MMD Senior Project Coordinator

[Interview with Mr Attilio Pacifici \(Adviser on migration to the Managing Director for Africa, European External Action Service\)](#)

In November 2015, the Valletta Summit on Migration brought together the leaders of African and European partner countries and organisations of the Rabat Process and Khartoum Process. For the first time, partner countries of these two migration dialogues held a joint meeting at such a high level, which resulted in the adoption of the Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP). The summit was called in the context of repeated tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea, with the aim of identifying a joint Euro-African response. Mr Attilio Pacifici, Adviser on migration to the Managing Director for Africa at the European External Action Service (EEAS), talks about the steps taken since the Summit and the importance of combining actions producing visible results in the short-term with those aiming at the long-term.

In February 2017, a little more than one year after the summit, the partners met again for a Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in Valletta, to take stock of the progress achieved so far. What were the main lessons that can be drawn from this SOM?

The figures of people dying in the Mediterranean Sea and those illegally crossing the EU borders are

still growing and there is clear need to take action.

A key observation emerging from the discussions in Malta was that it is difficult to achieve measurable progress in just one year. Next time we will meet 24 months after the Summit, which gives the partners a more reasonable period of time to bring actions under way and evaluate results. This insight was shared by both the African and the European partners.

Mali and Ethiopia truly did an excellent job at the SOM as leading States respectively chairing the Rabat and the Khartoum process. They safeguarded and upheld the specificity of each process by issuing separate reports on the implementation of the Valletta Joint Action Plan in their respective geographic areas and also agreed on joint conclusions in order to maintain a comprehensive and joint approach. The conclusions, which remained rather open, were the result of very lively discussions, which resulted in good recommendations on the way forward. Now the two processes have the responsibility to keep track of the implementation of the JVAP.

In this context, it is particularly important to continue to cross-fertilise the two migration dialogues, to keep exchanging experiences and to meet more regularly.

One of the recommendations adopted at the SOM states the need to go beyond the funding available through the European Union Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) and to mobilise the whole range of existing resources.

We need to use all range of available instruments and resources. Furthermore, we also need a good mix of actions having short, medium and long-term effects. Dealing with root causes is crucial as it brings about needed permanent changes but results are usually seen only in the medium- or long-term.

The current presidency of the European Council made clear that it is necessary more than ever before to step up our fight against migrants' smugglers and traffickers of human beings who have been operating particularly in Libya. Engaging with Libya is crucial and it can lead to both short term and long-term results.

Concerning the use of the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa launched at the Valletta Summit, most of the financing naturally goes to actions on the first pillar of Valletta (root causes) but it is not just about money. There are actions involving money and actions involving policy decisions. The latter can sometimes be worth more than a multi-million Euro project, because they can change the reality on the ground, create the conditions to improve the lives of people and also save lives of people immediately.

As to the insufficiency of the Trust Fund I would say let's talk less about it and use what we have to get results. Eventually, if results come more funding and actions will come.

In addition to the EUTF, a specific new initiative is being developed, the EU External Investment Plan, to address issues in the long-term. It involves helping developing countries create conditions conducive to attract private sector investments which are crucial to generate employment and improve the economic situation thereby also reducing migration push factors. There are specific measures in this initiative to help interested countries create such an enabling and secure environment which is a pre-condition for private investment.

Furthermore, it must be recalled that the EU for many years has been providing financial support to partner countries in Africa to improve good governance, fight corruption and boost agricultural

development, to name a few. All these domains are linked to the root causes of migration.

The partner countries called for equal attention to be accorded to all five domains of the JVAP. How do you interpret the concept of “equal attention”?

Equal attention does not necessarily mean allocating equal financial resources. It means that we have to balance the attention given to each action pillars of the Joint Valletta Action Plan from a qualitative standpoint. The spirit of the approach agreed in Valletta in 2015 by African and European leaders was to launch actions to address the challenges and opportunities of migration in a comprehensive and balanced way with actions taking place in parallel over all the five domains of the Action Plan.

How can we move towards creating equality between the pillars?

This can only happen step by step. The stance “more for more, less for less” only creates deadlock. As a fact this language was abolished in the very early stages of the Valletta negotiations as it was creating misgivings among partners and was stalling the discussions. This concept of “equality between pillars” or rather of balancing actions is very important as the domains of the JVAP are closely interlinked and progress in one facilitates progress in another one. Take for instance legal migration, which to African partners has not been properly addressed so far, progress in this domain depends on the progress made in the area of readmission in which to European partners much more progress is needed. If there is no readmission mechanism in place for those who breach international law, why should a country open more its border? In the end, it is an issue of building trust between partners and the principle of balancing every action over the five Valletta domains is crucial to build such a trust and move forward in a way that all parties feel comfortable.

One of the recommendations was to maximise initiatives with a regional scope. How can we achieve a balance between national interests and a regional dimension?

There are issues like smuggling where it is simply better to take a regional approach because one country alone cannot make a difference. In addition, by strengthening African countries’ capacities to control their territories, we will respond to challenges such as terrorism, which go far beyond African borders. Food security is another example where a regional approach would be highly valuable to balance shortages and avoid migration crises.

Improving regional trade is also very important. Currently, West Africa is already benefitting a lot from ECOWAS’ free movement policy (Economic Community of West African States), but its full potential has not yet been exploited. On regional trade, there are still too many African countries importing food from Europe instead of from their neighbors. In supporting regional mobility and regional trade we can boost economic growth significantly which will, in turn, reduce the push factors of migration.

A full-fledged JVAP monitoring tool is currently under development. What does it take to create an efficient mechanism?

In terms of monitoring the actions related to the JVAP, the database developed by ICMPD is a useful instrument to provide a global overview. It is not supposed to evaluate these projects, but to provide the partners with a tool to better understand what is happening in the field of migration. In order to succeed with this monitoring exercise, it is important that each and every partner country updates information regularly.

What is the ultimate long-term goal of the Valletta process and what will determine its success?

The idea behind the Valletta Summit was to prevent further losses of lives along the irregular migratory routes between Africa and Europe and create the conditions to allow people to move legally to achieve their professional and educational aims if they wish and not because they are obliged.

The role of Mali at the Meeting of Senior Officials' in Malta in 2017

Since the Valletta Migration Summit in November 2015, Mali has been one of the leading countries in following up this new policy cooperation framework on migration. Mali has always played a prominent role since the launch of the Rabat Process in 2016, one that has been stepped up since it became an official member of the Dialogue Steering Committee in 2014, along with Portugal. Mali also takes part in the discussions to strengthen, stimulate and guide the dialogue, always through a balanced and consensual approach. At the Meeting of Senior Officials held on 7th and 8th February in Malta, His Excellency Dr. Abdramane Sylla, Minister of Malians Abroad, presented the role of Mali, which at that time Chair of the Rabat Process, in the context of this important meeting. It is worth pointing out that said meeting was conducted jointly with Ethiopia, as Chair of the Khartoum Process.

His Excellency reiterated that the process which led to the drafting of the Analysis Report of Rabat Process in Valletta was conducted in a participatory framework under the coordination of Mali, which commended the strong commitment and spirit of partnership shown by the countries in the Rabat Process. This Report provides an analysis of the actions undertaken since the summit, and is the result of a joint effort: the commitment of Mali, the availability of the Drafting Committee and the constant support of the Secretariat of the Rabat Process, assumed by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

During the Senior Officials' Meeting, Mali and the partners of the Rabat Process invited the partners of Valletta, which included the stakeholders of the Khartoum Process, to take into account the Analysis Report of the Rabat Process and the recommendations. To ensure effective implementation and monitoring of the Joint Valletta Action Plan, Mali reiterated the importance of the principle of cooperation and the need to mobilise all of the Valletta partners. Mali moreover supports the efforts currently under way to follow up the Valletta Action Plan in the long run.

The Valletta Migration Summit and the Joint Valletta Action Plan have a positive impact on the visibility and scope of the Euro-African dialogue and on Migration and Development (Rabat Process). As such, the Senior Officials' Meetings was fundamental for the partners of the Rabat Process, enabling the creation of a new dynamic. It also helped to consolidate the common approach and to reinforce coordination between the various stakeholders and the synergies between the regional dialogues.

ICMPD's role in the implementation of the Joint Valletta Action Plan

At the Valletta Summit on Migration in November 2015, partners of the Rabat Process and Khartoum Process committed "to respond decisively and together manage migration flows in all their aspects". The resulting Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP) determined 16 priority actions around 5 topical domains, guiding the partner countries' efforts for the period 2016-2018. The International Centre

for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) has since played a central role in facilitating and supporting the Rabat Process and the Khartoum Process to take on the roles assigned to them at the Summit and to follow-up the progress in the implementation of the JVAP.

In fact, ICMPD was tasked with developing a reporting/monitoring instrument to map the partners' responses to the JVAP. Recently, ICMPD successfully concluded the preparatory phase and presented its outcomes at the Joint Valletta Action Plan Senior Officials Meeting, held in Malta in February 2017.

At this meeting, the Valletta partners recognised the importance of the preliminary results and visual overview provided by the mapping exercise. The JVAP Reporting and Monitoring team had gathered and analysed information made available by the Rabat Process and Khartoum Process partner countries, which resulted in:

- a mapping of projects and programmes;
- a mapping of policies and legislation;
- two analysis reports, focusing respectively on the Rabat Process and the Khartoum Process.

In addition, ICMPD presented the prototype of a web-based reporting/monitoring database that could further streamline data collection by National Focal Points supporting the two regional dialogues.

On the basis of these results, the Valletta partners highlighted the importance of initiating the use of an automated long-term reporting instrument for the JVAP. Therefore, they approved the establishment of a fully-fledged and efficient reporting/monitoring tool, including systematic data collection, following the model presented by ICMPD.

Based on this decision, the monitoring database has entered into its pilot phase, during which JVAP Reporting and Monitoring team will test and fine-tune it. User-friendliness and technical functionalities will be further improved to ease data entry. The database will ultimately become a full-fledged web-based reporting/monitoring instrument.

Concluding word from the Maltese Presidency

Malta was pleased to host the Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP) Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) on the 8th and 9th of February 2017 which was the first follow-up meeting pursuant to the Valletta Summit on Migration of November 2015. As mandated by the Political Declaration agreed upon by the Heads of State and Government in Valletta, the SOM took stock of the progress made in the implementation of the JVAP. The meeting offered a platform for open debate, giving participants the opportunity to express their views and concerns, share their experiences and highlight the areas in which more effort needs to be made.

It is auspicious that a set of Joint Conclusions was adopted during the meeting, to which the two Analysis Reports produced by the Rabat and Khartoum processes were attached. The Maltese Presidency commends the important work conducted by the two Processes as well as the ownership and constructive and active role played by the two Chairs, Mali and Ethiopia, not only during the SOM but also in the run-up to this meeting. It is clear that the JVAP has had a positive impact on cooperation between EU and African countries in the area of migration, with this issue prominently featuring on the agenda of both continents. Indeed, in merely 16 months, considerable progress has been registered in the implementation of the JVAP.

The good level of participation in this meeting was a reaffirmation of the commitment made by partners sixteen months ago. Moving forward, it is important that the current momentum is maintained with regard to the implementation of the JVAP, while at the same time addressing those concerns raised during the SOM. In this respect a spirit of partnership and open dialogue, remains key.

The Maltese Presidency looks forward to continue taking forward this work with our African partners a spirit of partnership, and hopes that the next SOM in 2018 will highlight further achievements and a further strengthening of this partnership and joint work.

Upcoming events

- **Steering Committee – Belgium**
- **Editorial Committees (new multi-annual cooperation programme) – Belgium**

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