European Council

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COVER NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	European Council meeting (25 and 26 June 2015) – Conclusions

Delegations will find attached the conclusions adopted by the European Council at the above meeting.

I. MIGRATION

1. Europe needs a balanced and geographically comprehensive approach to migration, based on solidarity and responsibility. Following the decisions taken by the European Council last April, concrete measures have been taken to prevent further loss of life at sea, to find new ways of confronting smugglers and to intensify cooperation with countries of origin and transit, while respecting the right to seek asylum. The launch of the EUNAVFOR MED mission, decided on 22 June by the Council, is an important contribution in this respect. Operational action to tackle the traffickers and smugglers in accordance with international law is an essential part of our comprehensive approach.

2. Further to the Commission's European Agenda on Migration, work should be taken forward on all dimensions of a comprehensive and systemic approach.

3. Wider efforts, including the reinforcement of the management of the Union's external borders, are required to better contain the growing flows of illegal migration. Today, the European Council focused on three key dimensions which must be advanced in parallel: relocation/resettlement, return/readmission/reintegration and cooperation with countries of origin and transit. The Council will regularly assess progress in all three strands and report back later in the year.

Relocation/resettlement

4. In the light of the current emergency situation and of our commitment to reinforce solidarity and responsibility, and in line with its April decision in all its regards, including paragraph 3, the European Council agreed on the following interlinked measures to help 60.000 people:

   a) the temporary and exceptional relocation over two years from the frontline Member States Italy and Greece to other Member States of 40.000 persons in clear need of international protection, in which all Member States[1] will participate;

   b) the rapid adoption by the Council of a Decision to this effect; to that end, all Member States[1] will agree by consensus by the end of July on the distribution of such persons, reflecting the specific situations of Member States;

   c) the setting up of reception and first reception facilities in the frontline Member States, with the active support of Member States' experts and of EASO, Frontex and Europol to ensure the swift identification, registration and fingerprinting of migrants ("hotspots"). This will allow to determine those who need international protection and those who do not. The Commission will draw up, in close cooperation with the hosting Member States, a roadmap by July 2015 on the legal, financial and operational aspects of these facilities;

   d) the immediate provision of enhanced financial assistance to the frontline Member States to help alleviate the costs of receiving and processing applications for international protection;

   e) the agreement that all Member States will participate including through multilateral and national schemes in the resettling of 20.000 displaced persons in clear need of international protection, reflecting the specific situations of Member States.

[1] Without prejudice to the specific situation of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark pursuant to Protocols 21 and 22 to the Treaties. The UK will not participate**.**

Return/readmission/reintegration

5. Effective return, readmission and reintegration policies for those not qualifying for protection are an essential part of combating illegal migration and will help discourage people from risking their lives. All tools shall be mobilised to promote readmission of irregular migrants to countries of origin and transit, building on the ideas presented by the Commission at the Council on 16 June[2]. In particular:

a) high-level dialogues with the main countries of origin of irregular migrants should be launched by the High Representative as soon as possible, in close cooperation with the Member States. The Council, together with the Commission, will prepare a global package to support the negotiations with the third countries concerned;

b) the Commission will ensure that readmission commitments are implemented effectively as soon as possible, notably those under the Cotonou Agreement, and that ongoing negotiations on readmission agreements are accelerated and concluded as soon as possible, while new negotiations will be launched with other third countries;

c) building on the "more-for-more" principle, EU assistance and policies will be used to create incentives for implementing existing readmission agreements and concluding new ones. Commitments set out in trade agreements regarding the temporary presence of persons for the provision of services should be used as an incentive to conclude readmission agreements; development policy tools should reinforce local capacity-building, including for border control, asylum, counter-smuggling and reintegration;

d) Member States will fully implement the Return Directive, making full use of all measures it provides to ensure the swift return of irregular migrants; return decisions issued by the Member States will be introduced in the Schengen Information System;

[2] Doc. 10170/15.

e) the Commission will set out by July 2015 how Frontex will bring immediate support to frontline States on return. The Commission has announced its intention to propose to amend the Frontex Regulation to strengthen the role of Frontex, notably so that it can initiate return missions;

f) in order to accelerate the treatment of asylum applications, the Commission will set out by July 2015 measures to be taken to use EASO to coordinate the implementation of the "safe country of origin" provisions in the Asylum Procedures Directive. The Commission has indicated its intention to strengthen the "safe country of origin" provisions in the Asylum Procedures Directive, including the possible establishment of a common EU list of safe countries of origin;

g) adequate means will rapidly be made available in support of an effective EU return policy; furthermore, the Commission is invited to make proposals in this respect in the context of the 2016 EU budget, and to set up a dedicated European Return Programme.

Cooperation with countries of origin and transit

6. It is crucial to reinforce our overall cooperation with countries of origin and transit, both on stemming the flows of irregular migrants and on tackling the root causes of migration so as to reduce the incentives for illegal migration and to combat the smuggling networks. Development assistance will play an important role in this respect.

7. A true partnership between European and African countries, working together to tackle illegal migration in an integrated way, is essential. The Valletta Summit will seek in particular to achieve, together with the African partners:

   a) assistance to partner countries in their fight against smugglers;

   b) a strengthened cooperation on an effective return policy;

   c) better targeting of development cooperation and enhancing investments in Africa to address the root causes of migration, as well as providing economic and social opportunities.

   The Council will prepare proposals for areas of cooperation with countries of origin and transit for the Valletta Summit.

8. The EU will also step up its cooperation with Turkey and the relevant countries in the Middle East (notably Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon).

9. A high-level conference will be organised to address the challenges of the Western Balkans route.

II. SECURITY AND DEFENCE

10. Europe's security environment has changed dramatically. This requires action in three interconnected areas:

    a) further to the Commission's "European Agenda on Security" and the Council conclusions of 16 June 2015, work will be taken forward on the renewed European Union Internal Security Strategy; full implementation of the orientations on the fight against terrorism agreed at the February 2015 meeting remains a priority;

    b) the High Representative will continue the process of strategic reflection with a view to preparing an EU global strategy on foreign and security policy in close cooperation with Member States, to be submitted to the European Council by June 2016;

c) in line with the European Council conclusions of December 2013 and the Council conclusions of 18 May 2015, work will continue on a more effective, visible and result-oriented CSDP, the further development of both civilian and military capabilities, and the strengthening of Europe's defence industry, including SMEs. The European Council recalls the need for:

- the Member States to allocate a sufficient level of expenditure for defence and the need to make the most effective use of the resources;
- the EU budget to ensure appropriate funding for the preparatory action on CSDP-related research, paving the way for a possible future defence research and technology programme;
- fostering greater and more systematic European defence cooperation to deliver key capabilities, including through EU funds;
- mobilising EU instruments to help counter hybrid threats;
- intensifying partnerships, namely with the UN, NATO, OSCE and AU;
- empowering and enabling partners to prevent and manage crises, including through concrete projects of capacity building with a flexible geographic scope.

The European Council will keep security and defence policy regularly on its agenda.

III. JOBS, GROWTH AND COMPETITIVENESS

11. The European Council concluded the 2015 European Semester by generally endorsing the Country Specific Recommendations and calling for their implementation. The European Council welcomed the agreement reached on the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and called for its rapid implementation.

12. Digital technologies bring immense opportunities for innovation, growth and jobs. In order to benefit fully from this technological revolution, we need to tackle market fragmentation, ensure future-proof regulation, build supporting infrastructure, help the digitisation of industry, create conditions to facilitate growth in all sectors and protect our citizens. The Digital Single Market should be used as a vehicle for inclusive growth in all regions within the EU. While emphasising the importance of all dimensions of the Commission's strategy and pursuing an ambitious reform of the telecommunications framework, including more effective spectrum coordination while respecting national competences, the European Council agreed that:

a) the Telecommunications Single Market Regulation, including roaming, and the Directive on Network and Information Security must be rapidly adopted; the Data Protection package must be adopted by the end of this year;

b) action must be taken on key components of the Commission communication, notably to:

- remove the remaining barriers to the free circulation of goods and services sold on-line and tackle unjustified discrimination on the grounds of geographic location;

- guarantee the portability and facilitate cross-border access to online material protected by copyright, while ensuring a high level of protection of intellectual property rights and taking into account cultural diversity, and help creative industries to thrive in a digital context;

- ensure effective investment instruments and improve the innovation climate, targeting in particular SMEs and start-ups;
- identify and deliver rapidly on the key ICT standardisation priorities;
- ensure the free flow of data;
- assess the role of on-line platforms and intermediaries;
- improve digital skills;
- encourage e-Government.

13. The European Council took note of the report on the Economic and Monetary Union requested by the December 2014 European Council and asked the Council to rapidly examine it.

IV. UK

14. The UK Prime Minister set out his plans for an (in/out) referendum in the UK. The European Council agreed to revert to the matter in December.

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The European Council expressed its gratitude to Jacques Delors, former President of the European Commission, for his remarkable contribution to the development of the European project and decided to bestow the title of "Honorary Citizen of Europe" on him.