European Council

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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	European Council meeting (18 October 2018) – Conclusions

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

I. MIGRATION

1. The European Council assessed the state of implementation of its June conclusions and called for work to be continued on all elements as part of its comprehensive approach to migration. While the number of detected illegal border crossings into the EU has been brought down by 95% from its peak in October 2015, some internal and recent external flows warrant sustained attention.

2. Following the informal Leaders' discussion in Salzburg, the European Council highlights the importance of further preventing illegal migration and of strengthening cooperation with countries of origin and transit, particularly in North Africa, as part of a broader partnership.

3. The fight against people-smuggling networks needs to be stepped up: work with third countries on investigating, apprehending and prosecuting smugglers and traffickers should be intensified, with a view to preventing people from embarking on perilous journeys. A joint task force should be established at Europol's European Migrant Smuggling Centre. Smuggling networks' online communications should be better monitored and disrupted. The Council, with the support of the Commission, is invited to develop a comprehensive and operational set of measures to this end by December.

4. The European Council invites the European Parliament and the Council to examine, as a matter of priority, the recent Commission proposals on the Return Directive, the Asylum Agency and the European Border and Coast Guard, ensuring the most efficient use of resources and developing common minimum standards of external border surveillance, with due respect for the responsibility of the Member States.

5. More should be done to facilitate effective returns. Existing readmission agreements should be better implemented, in a non discriminatory way towards all Member States, and new agreements and arrangements concluded, while creating and applying the necessary leverage by using all relevant EU policies, instruments and tools, including development, trade and visa. Additional efforts are needed to fully implement the EU-Turkey Statement.

6. The Austrian Chancellor reported on the reform of the Common European Asylum System and on the prospects for progress on its various elements. The European Council encouraged the Council Presidency to continue its work with a view to concluding it as soon as possible.

II. INTERNAL SECURITY

7. In recent years, real progress has been made to strengthen our internal security through better cooperation, concrete measures on the ground, and the adoption of a range of legal texts, such as on Passenger Name Records, combating terrorism and ensuring a high common level of network and information security. These need to be fully implemented.

8. The EU will further strengthen its deterrence and resilience against hybrid, cyber, as well as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats. Recalling its previous conclusions concerning the Salisbury attack, the European Council condemns the hostile cyber-attack carried out against the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Such threats and attacks strengthen our common resolve to further enhance the EU's internal security and our ability and capabilities to detect, prevent, disrupt and respond to hostile activities of foreign intelligence networks and other malicious actors on our territories as well as online. The European Council welcomes the adoption of the new regime of restrictive measures to address the threat from chemical weapons and looks forward to early progress on the listing of relevant individuals and entities.

9. The European Council also calls for measures to:

   - combat cyber and cyber-enabled illegal and malicious activities and build strong cybersecurity. Work on the capacity to respond to and deter cyber-attacks through EU restrictive measures should be taken forward, further to the 19 June 2017 Council conclusions. In order to strengthen EU resilience against cyber-attacks, negotiations on all cybersecurity proposals should be concluded before the end of the legislature;

- protect the Union's democratic systems and combat disinformation, including in the context of the upcoming European elections, in full respect of fundamental rights. In this respect, the measures proposed by the Commission on election cooperation networks, online transparency, protection against cybersecurity incidents, unlawful data manipulation and fighting disinformation campaigns and tightening the rules on European political party funding deserve rapid examination and operational follow-up by the competent authorities. The Commission will assess the implementation of the Code of Practice on disinformation by the end of the year. The European Council looks forward to the Action Plan for a coordinated EU response, to be presented by December 2018, as set out in its June conclusions;

- strengthen the capacity to prevent and respond effectively to radicalisation and terrorism, in full respect of fundamental rights. The Commission proposal on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online should be examined as a matter of priority. Solutions should be found to ensure swift and efficient cross-border access to e-evidence in order to effectively fight terrorism and other serious and organised crime, both within the EU and at international level; the Commission proposals on e-evidence and access to financial information, as well as to better combat money laundering, should be agreed on by the end of the legislature. The Commission should also urgently submit negotiating mandates for the international negotiations on e-evidence. The Commission initiative to extend the competences of the European Public Prosecutor's Office to cross-border terrorist crimes should be examined;

- provide Member States' law enforcement authorities, Europol and Eurojust with adequate resources to face new challenges posed by technological developments and the evolving security threat landscape, including through pooling of equipment, enhanced partnerships with the private sector, interagency cooperation and improved access to data;

- improve the interoperability of information systems and databases. Much progress has already been made in developing information systems and information exchange, but further efforts are needed to make them work together, in particular through a common identity repository. Negotiations on pending proposals, including on a strengthened European Criminal Records System, should be concluded by the end of the year and all measures needed for their implementation should be taken with the highest priority;

- strengthen our crisis management capacity and the coherence and effectiveness of the EU and national crisis response mechanisms. Negotiations on the EU civil protection mechanism proposal should be concluded by the end of the year.

III. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

10. The European Council considers that EU-Africa relations are of paramount importance in a rapidly changing global landscape. Our cooperation should be taken to a new level, underpinned by the necessary resources, including through the European External Investment Plan and the EU Trust Fund for Africa. It welcomes the presentation of the Commission's initiative for a new Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs and calls for actions to be taken forward, including through concrete proposals for Member States' involvement.

11. Following the informal Leaders' discussion in Salzburg, the European Council welcomes the holding of the forthcoming first summit between the 28 EU Member States and the League of Arab States, hosted by Egypt on 24-25 February 2019.

12. The EU and its Member States are fully committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its implementation. The European Council welcomes the intention of the Commission to publish its Reflection Paper in 2018, which should pave the way for a comprehensive implementation strategy in 2019.

13. The European Council has taken note of the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report, which unequivocally confirms the negative impacts of climate change, including its conclusions indicating that global emission reductions in all sectors are crucial and that further action is needed in mitigation and adaptation, notably to reach the temperature goal as set out in the Paris Agreement.

14. With a view to COP24 that will be held in Poland from 2 December 2018, the European Council endorses the Council conclusions on preparations for the UNFCCC meetings in Katowice and gives Poland its full support in organising COP24. This COP24 must result in the adoption of ambitious and comprehensive implementing rules of the Paris Agreement and the outcome of the Talanoa Dialogue should be a commitment for all Parties to reflect on their levels of ambition and inform the preparation of all Parties' nationally determined contributions (NDCs) pursuant to Article 4 of the Paris Agreement.