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NOTE

From: European Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS)
To: Permanent Representatives Committee

Subject: Joint Commission-EEAS non-paper on enhancing cooperation on
migration, mobility and readmission with Mali

Delegations will find attached the above joint Commission-EEAS non-paper.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 24 February 2016

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FROM:	European Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS)
TO:	COREPER Ambassadors
SUBJECT:	Joint Commission-EEAS non-paper on enhancing cooperation on migration, mobility and readmission with Mali

Country Fiche proposing possible leverages across Commission-EEAS policy areas to enhance returns and effectively implement readmission commitments.

1- Key Migration features

Mali nationals as migrants to the EU

- Mali is a country of origin, and to some extent also a country of transit. It is estimated that around 4 million Malians live outside Mali, of which at least 300 000 are legally resident in Europe.
- There were 6 525 irregular border crossings by Malian citizens registered in 2015. It was 10 575 in 2014, which was amongst the highest from African countries. In 2014, there were some 13 000 asylum applicants from Mali in the EU. The number of Malian citizens found to be illegally staying in the EU rose from 3 849 in 2014 to 4 548 in 2015. Very low return ratio which was 11,1 % for 2014 (5 495 return decisions and 610 returns)
- The country is opposed to readmission agreements.

Migrant situation in Mali

- Mali is a country of emigration mainly towards the sub-region (Côte d'Ivoire) and Europe. Structurally and historically, two regions are particularly affected by emigration: Kayes and Bamako. The reasons, push factors, for departure are firstly demographic (growth), economic but also cultural. The presence of a large Malian diaspora in Europe is considered an important 'pull factor'.

- The North of the country is experiencing cyclical migration following the crisis and deteriorating security situation that are impacting Mali since 2012. Part of local populations has fled to refugee camps in neighbouring countries, but the majority of them were internally displaced.
- Mali is also a transit country for migrants coming from West Africa, in particular for irregular migration flows. Assisted by traffickers they cross the borders with Mauritania, Algeria, and Niger.

2- Relations with the EU

General

- The EU is a key partner for Mali, politically, in terms of development cooperation (some EUR 1,7 billion for 2014-2017), and in terms of security: Operation Barkhane, two CSDP missions (EUTM and EUCAP Sahel), very significant troop contribution to MINUSMA, police and bilateral military cooperation etc.).
- Strong collective EU commitment in supporting Mali both on development (EDF) and security (two CSDP missions deployed). Important humanitarian support is provided through DG ECHO.

Migration relations Mali-EU

- Views and interests on migration between the EU and Mali do not coincide. The cultural dimension of migration as a model of success and the economic importance of remittances has to be taken into consideration. Fundamentally, even if partly irregular, migration is considered as a resource by the Malian government.
- In addition to the recent participation in the Valletta Summit and Mali's membership to the Rabat process and the EU-ACP Dialogue on Migration and Development, no dedicated high level dialogue on migration has recently taken place between the EU and Mali. Mali is opposed to engage on readmission agreements. No specific technical or local dialogue with the EU is in place so far.
- The "CIGEM" project (an EDF-funded Migration Information and Management Centre) had delivered very limited results and lacked Malian ownership but was key as a vehicle for demonstrating partnership on migration to the Malian authorities.
- To date, participation of Mali in EU programmes (Erasmus+ and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions) has been low. One university has now joined the Africa-EU Harmonization and Tuning initiative, which is involving 120 universities in 42 countries across Africa.
- A technical mission to identify possible Trust Fund projects took place in January 2016.

Migration relations Mali- EU Member States

- Spain is the only EU country to have a migration agreement with Mali, mentioning readmission, but the returns have largely been suspended since the 2012-2013 security crisis.
- For France, Mali is part of the priority list of priority countries defined in the 2015 action plan aimed at improving identification and return process of its (alleged) nationals.

3 – Key interests of the country and the EU

Interests of the country

- The EU is a key partner for Mali in many respects and collective EU support to the country in the areas of security and development aid is very significant. Maintaining this commitment should be an incentive in itself, and an excellent platform for High Level Dialogue.
- Remittances are very important for Mali's economy (around 10% of GDP).
- Mali is very attached to the notions of national independence and pride. It has a clear interest in mitigating the death tolls (almost two hundred Malians were among the drowned victims on 19 April 2015).
- Mali is highly vulnerable to impact of climate change. It is currently developing a strategy to mobilize climate finance. The cost of adaptation needs is estimated to a EUR 1 billion by 2020.
- Mali has an interest to strengthen security, border management, and civil registry.

Interests of the EU

- Poverty reduction, continued social and economic development, providing, inter alia, improved employment opportunities for youth.
- Peace and regional stability, improved governance and security (in particular terrorist activities); improved border management, civil registry and reduced flow of irregular migrants from Mali (and related loss of lives in the Mediterranean); significantly stepping up of cooperation on readmission.
- Achieve progress on return and readmission.

- It will be key to clearly demonstrate the EU's collective strong interest in stepping up dialogue and cooperation on migration, including return and readmission, and to communicate coherent messages. Engagement in dedicated high level dialogue should pave the way for more detailed dialogue at the technical level, improving the understanding of Mali's expectations, needs and priorities for possible support.

4 - Possible components of an EU incentives package¹

- Continued political and security-related support is considered key for the Malian authorities and could support dialogue and cooperation on migration.
- Assurances on the preservation of migrant's rights and protection would be conducive and would positively impact on the public opinion in Mali.
- Confirm the EU's engagement to support the Mali peace process and to fight against terrorism (including support from Member States), as well as the fight against radicalisation and violent extremism. This issue is covered by the EU Sahel Action Plan and is also subject of EU dialogue in the framework with the G5 Sahel grouping.
- Explore possible legal migration channels towards the EU (in particular for students, researchers and entrepreneurs) and explore with the Member States the possibility of pooling the available offers.
- Enhancing of the mutual recognition of academic qualifications and mobility of students and researchers both within Africa and between Africa and the EU (Erasmus+ and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions).
- Mobilise EU Emergency Trust Fund support in responding the Mali's priorities with regard to addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, to improve migration management and to tackle criminal networks (a first batch of 3 projects, worth EUR 43.5 million, has been approved on 14 January 2016.).
- Support in the area of border management and control (equipment is a frequent request), also including closer cooperation on intelligence and modernizing civil registry.
- Use EU's high (collective) commitment to development cooperation which will addresses the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, including the creation of employment for youth. EU and Member States combined development support through the Joint programming exercise amounts to almost EUR 1,8 billion, and future bilateral programmes could provide leverage for dialogue. Mali is highly depending on international support for development purposes, a part of it is provided as budget support (11th EDF is EUR 615 million; a EUR 220 million State Building Contract was awarded in 2015).

¹ No conditionality can be attached to needs-based humanitarian aid in line with the Humanitarian principles.

- Consider additional support to tackling negative impacts of climate change.
 - leverage of Schengen visa issuance, within the boundaries of the Visa Code, to be discussed with the Member States;
 - restrictions in bilateral visa exemption agreements for diplomatic and service passport holders, to be discussed with the Member States

5 - Recommendations

- The important role the EU and Member States collectively play for the development and the security of the country provide incentives for deepened dialogue and cooperation on migration. Mali is significantly dependent on EU support in the area development aid, including budget support. The proportion of budget support is relatively high (so far, almost 40% of 11 EDF NIP) and offers permanent platform for dialogue. In turn, given Mali's low level of income and resilience, in addition to its high vulnerability to external shocks, resources for development cooperation are to be considered essential to preserve the countries development prospects.
- A well balanced approach, combining collective EU messaging with a package of positive incentives seems advisable. Member States could make significant contributions to such an approach, potentially providing incentives in the area of mobility and legal migration. To be noted that a considerable part of the positive incentives lie in Member States competence. However, the EU and its MS should stand equally ready collectively to consider some of the elements outlined in the fiche as negative incentives, having in mind the potential impact this could have on EU interest and other policies' objectives.

6 - Proposed next steps

- Local political dialogue (1st quarter 2016) to prepare the basis for a High Level Dialogue during the first 6 months of 2016. The EUSR Sahel could play a major role in its preparation, implementation and follow-up.
- Envisage technical missions to Mali, if possible during the 1st semester 2016.
- Further Trust Fund technical missions to continue project identification.
- High-level dialogue, possibly by the Dutch MFA on behalf of the EU (1st semester 2016).