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NOTE

From: Commission Services
To: Delegations

Subject: Operationalization of the Pact – Action plans for strengthening
comprehensive migration partnerships with priority countries of origin and
transit
Draft Action Plan: Tunisia

Delegations will find attached a draft action plan for Tunisia prepared by the Commission Services.

The Commission would very much appreciate that the text of the draft action plan be handled with discretion.

Action Plan: Tunisia

Overall EU Objectives – Lines to Take

- The partnership between Tunisia and the EU should be rooted in a mutual interest and aspiration to continue building a prosperous and stable Tunisian democracy.
- Since the 2011 Revolution, the EU has mobilised all its instruments to accompany the country's progress in democracy, good governance, and the rule of law. Almost €3 billion in EU assistance has been provided.
- Despite its achievements, Tunisia faces a challenging period today, which the EU is following closely. The fragmentation of the Parliament after the October 2019 elections and prolonged political instability, culminating in President Saïed's dismissal of the Mechichi government and freezing of Parliament on 25 July 2021, combined with a dramatic health situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have hampered progress on much needed socio-economic reforms.
- The EU will continue to support Tunisia's path to democracy, its efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic challenges. Institutional unity is needed to face the dire economic and social consequences of the pandemic and carry out essential reforms. Cooperation with Tunisia will be subject to its continued commitment to democracy, human rights, gender equality, and good governance.
- The EU's priorities in its relations with Tunisia are based on the Association Agreement signed by the EU and Tunisia in 1995 and shaped by the Council Conclusions on a renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood and the 2021-2027 EU-Tunisia Strategic Priorities, which are currently being updated: i) The promotion of a common space of values, ii) An inclusive, sustainable and connected socio-economic development iii) Closer ties between the two shores of the Mediterranean and the management of migration and mobility, and iv) Peace and Security.

Goals for managing migration and addressing forced displacement – Lines to Take

- The EU is committed to deepening its partnership on migration with Tunisia, as reflected in the 2018-2020 EU-Tunisia Strategic Priorities, which are currently being updated, and will continue to underline the importance of migration and mobility in line with the Mobility Partnership established with Tunisia in 2014.

Protection and support to host countries

- The EU aims to support Tunisia in ensuring a robust and sustainable legal and operational protection framework for vulnerable third country nationals in Tunisia. The EU calls on the Tunisian Parliament to adopt the 2017 draft law on asylum and the establishment of a protection framework, prepared with EASO's support.
- EASO aims to involve Tunisia in its Regional Pilot for North Africa that should

foster exchanges and support asylum practitioners from countries in the region.

Root causes of irregular migration

- The EU supports implementation of Tunisia's national strategy on migration, including reinforcement of socio-economic opportunities for young Tunisians in regions most affected by migration, drawing on development funds.
- The EU will continue working with Tunisia on programmes to improve young people's prospects and employability, thus reducing migratory pressure, such as Erasmus+ and Creative Europe.
- The EU also mobilises Tunisians abroad and supports sustainable reintegration of Tunisian returnees, including through a national reintegration mechanism.

Migration governance and management

- The EU seeks a reduction of irregular departures of migrants from Tunisia, both Tunisian citizens and third-country nationals, which have considerably increased throughout 2020 and 2021. The EU welcomes Tunisian efforts to prevent irregular departures from its coast and conduct rescue operations, and recognises the strain on Tunisia's reception capacity and facilities. The EU counts on Tunisia to continue these efforts.
- The EU will continue working to enhance Tunisia's border management capabilities and strengthen its search and rescue system, to save lives, prevent irregular departures, manage irregular inflows from Libya, and tackle issues such as trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants. The EU also intends to continue supporting information campaigns on the risks of irregular migration.
- Additional options to extend the cooperation between Tunisia and the EU in the area of search and rescue, and prevention of irregular migration with the aim of preventing deaths at sea should be explored as a matter of priority.
- The EU encourages Tunisia to cooperate with Frontex, and to complete working arrangements with Europol and CEPOL. The EU will take any opportunity (conferences, missions, visits) to clarify the role of Frontex and familiarise Tunisian authorities with the agency.

Return, Readmission, Visa facilitation

- The EU wishes to further improve cooperation on returns of Tunisian nationals illegally staying in the EU as a matter of priority, with voluntary returns being the preferred option. With a view to ensuring effective readmission for all Member States one option – alongside strengthened EU engagement on readmission with Tunisia – is that the EU seeks to relaunch negotiations on a readmission agreement and a visa facilitation agreement.
- The EU stands ready to reinforce practical co-operation with Tunisia on identification and documentation, and on improving conditions of returns and returnees. Tunisia should extend the acceptance of return charter flights from all requesting Member States and accept the return of third-country nationals who transited the country before entering the EU. As part of its efforts to improve migration governance, Tunisia should develop cooperation on readmission with African partners.

Legal Migration

- Together with Member States, the EU is committed to deepening cooperation on legal migration, identifying sectors of mutual interest with a view to developing a Talent Partnership, with projects designed to avoid brain drain. Recognition of

qualifications and skills, more job opportunities, and seasonal migration will continue to be key elements for consideration.

Measures

- **Political engagement** under the EU-Tunisia Association Agreement (1995) and its institutional bodies, notably the Association Council, the Association Committee and Subcommittee on Migration and Social Affairs at technical level, as well as high-level visits and discussions.
- **Deploying a range of policy tools** in a wide range of areas including trade, agriculture, investment and employment, renewable energy, and initiatives targeting youth through development of socio-economic opportunities, education, and cultural initiatives.. Key measures to further cooperation on migration include a potential resumption of negotiations for a readmission agreement and visa facilitation, continuing to build Tunisian capacity for better migration and border management, and developing an offer on legal migration, including a possible Talent Partnership. Increased work with EU agencies such as Europol and CEPOL should also be considered.
- **Funding activities from EU budget under Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020:** The EU supports Tunisia with a total of €92 million in migration-related programmes under the North Africa window of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, accompanying the country in the implementation of the priorities of its National Strategy on Migration. In particular, EU support is aimed at mobilising Tunisians abroad for investment in the country, providing social and economic reintegration services to migrants and returnees, supporting young Tunisians prone to migration and vulnerable migrants and refugees, as well as at supporting the country's national governance on migration, the integrated border management system and labour migration governance.
- **Future funding from EU budget under Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027:** The draft **bilateral** Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 (MIP) is under preparation and is likely to focus on: i) a closer relationship between Tunisia and the EU; ii) an open and sustainable economy and; iii) a more inclusive and innovative economy. Migration is for the moment included under the first priority area with a focus on legal migration and addressing root causes of irregular migration. The multi-country migration programme for the Southern Neighbourhood will also provide a flexible source of funding to respond to changing needs and routes. The multi-country migration programme can be expected to include funding for protection to those in need; support to migration governance and management, including border management; fostering readmission, return and reintegration; and providing legal pathways and will focus on North Africa. Other EU instruments, notably the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI), and the Internal Security Fund (ISF) may under strict conditions provide complementary funding opportunities for the external dimension of migration.
- **Member States' bilateral engagement (set out in Annex in detail).** Tunisia will be included in the Team Europe Initiative on the Central Mediterranean migration route proposed by France and Italy. The proposal covers 1) legal migration and mobility; 2) protection and asylum; 3) prevention of irregular migration, fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings; 4) return, readmission and reintegration; as well as 5) addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement. The geographic and thematic scope is currently under discussion with Member States.
- Regarding **cooperation with EU agencies**, Tunisia is a priority country for CEPOL and Europol. EASO is working to establish contacts with the Tunisian administration. Tunisia currently rejects cooperation with Frontex.
- A **European Migration Liaison Officer** is posted in Tunisia.

Timelines for action
A. Next Steps for engagement by EU and by Member States
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcommittee on Migration and Social Affairs, foreseen for the fourth quarter of 2021 (tbc), to discuss current cooperation in the field of migration and related issues and explore perspectives for the future. • Association Committee, last quarter 2021 (tbc), for discussion at senior level on current areas of joint work, including migration. The discussions and operational conclusions of the subcommittees are to feed the exchanges in this meeting. • Association Council, last quarter 2021 (tbc), high-level meeting chaired by HRVP Borrell where the conclusions of the Association Committee are to be discussed. • High level visits: The Commission, EEAS and Member States should jointly engage in an active dialogue with Tunisia on effective migration management and prevention of deaths at sea. Potential follow-up missions to the visits of Commissioner Johansson (May 2021) and President Charles Michel (April 2021) to Tunisia as well as President Saïed's visit to Brussels (June 2021) and HRVP visit to Tunisia on 9-10 September. Commissioner Sinkevičius was represented in the Med Forum and related bilateral meetings in September 2021. • Signature of Working Arrangements between the Tunisian Ministry of the Interior and CEPOL (ready to be signed) and Europol (under negotiation), last quarter 2021. A joint signing ceremony could present an opportunity for more engagement. • Rabat Process: Senior Official Meeting on 17-18 November in Malabo. The meeting will take stock of the implementation of the Marrakesh Action Plan, which is the current strategic framework of the Rabat Process, review the achievements of Equatorial Guinea's Chairmanship of the Dialogue and mark the handover of the Chairmanship to Spain. • Khartoum Process: Senior Official Meeting in November (date tbc) in Khartoum; change of the Chairmanship from the Netherlands to Sudan.
B. Next steps for funding measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NDICI-Global Europe – country/regional MIPs: Second high-level geopolitical dialogue with the European Parliament (11 October 2021); Comitology procedure (November 2021); adoption of the 2021-2027 Multiannual Indicative Programmes (December 2021). • Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on the Central Mediterranean Route, next steps: TEI proposed by France and Italy. The concept note has been revised. The TEI was validated by Member States at the meeting with the Member States' development agencies on 4 October 2021, with agreement to go ahead with the design and implementation of the TEI.

ANNEX I

Existing EU cooperation and areas of engagement under the New Pact

I. Asylum / international protection

- The EU has supported Tunisia in drafting a national strategy on migration and asylum with funding from the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa under MFF 2014-2020. The EU Trust Fund also provided funding to protect those in need (€9.2 million), with two ongoing regional programmes covering Tunisia. One is implemented by UNHCR and focuses on enhancing self-reliance and access to rights for refugees and asylum seekers in North Africa (€ 2.9 million), while the other is implemented by NGOs (€ 2 million). A bilateral programme with a consortium of NGOs will be signed soon (€4.3 million).
- Under MFF 2014-2020, the Commission provided support for the integration of migrants and protection via a Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP), with a total EU contribution for 2015-2020 of €57 million for the whole of North Africa. Implementation was led by the Italian Ministry of Interior.
- EASO provided support for development of legislation on asylum and the establishment of a national protection framework.
- Going forward, the EU's objective is to ensure that the migration strategy and asylum law are finalised and approved and provide a robust protection framework. EASO has invited Tunisia to participate in regional peer-to-peer, technical exchanges on asylum-related matters.

II. Addressing root causes

- Ongoing bilateral cooperation under the MFF 2014-2020 includes a series of programmes, which address the root causes of migration by supporting, among others, the political and socio-economic participation of vulnerable Tunisian youth (EU4YOUth, €60 million), the sustainable and inclusive economic development of Tunisia through the diversification of the touristic offer (Tounes Wjihetouna, €45 million) and a better social inclusion to reduce poverty, socio-economic and regional disparities (Programme d'appui à l'inclusion sociale, €100 million).

III. Migration governance and management

- Under MFF 2014-2020, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa supports Tunisia in the implementation of the priorities of its National Strategy on Migration with several programmes (for a total of €18.5 million). This includes support for the development of a broad database in order to have a reliable and representative figures on migration dynamics in Tunisia.
- The Tunisian component of the Border Management Programme (BMP) Maghreb, funded by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (€ 30 million), is implemented by ICMPD (2018-2022), and focuses on strengthening the Tunisian Garde Nationale Maritime (Coast Guard). The main pillars of intervention include: i) establishing an integrated border surveillance and coastal communication system, ii) providing operational equipment to the Coast Guard and iii) capacity building through training sessions. A € 10 million top-up is being finalised.
- The implementation of the Reform of the Security Sector in Tunisia, which aims at addressing irregular crossings, human trafficking and smuggling, is supported by €23 million from the EU budget under MFF 2014-2020.
- Frontex does not currently implement border related activities in Tunisia and Tunisian authorities are reluctant to cooperate with it.

Counter-Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings

- The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa finances the initiative ‘Dismantling the cross-border criminal networks involved in human trafficking and smuggling of migrants in North Africa’ (€ 3.2 million), which has a Tunisia component where Austria is in the lead. The initiative provides for equipment and training for officers of the Internal Security Forces and the DG for Customs.
- The ‘Common Operational Partnerships along African migratory routes’ programme, which includes supporting capacity building measures in relation to migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, is supported by € 7.5 million from the EU budget under MFF 2014-2020.

Awareness-raising

- Since 2016, ‘Infomigrants’, a news and information website for migrants to counter misinformation has been supported from the EU budget with €14.6 million. A specific awareness campaign in Tunisia, ARISE, was also supported by €900 000 from the EU budget under MFF 2014-2020.

IV. Returns, readmission, reintegration

- Negotiations on a readmission agreement are stalled since 2019, when Tunisia asked for a pause given that both presidential and legislative elections were taking place in October 2019.
- The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa supports socio-economic reintegration of returnees and has helped set up the Tunisian-led reintegration mechanism Tounesna (€2.5 million of support, with an additional €3.9 million to be contracted soon). The objective is to strengthen the capacities of the Tunisian authorities to carry out reintegration at central and local level and to reinforce coordination among EU Member States encouraging referral to the national reintegration mechanism.

V. Legal migration and mobility

- Tunisia is one of the beneficiary countries of the regional programme ‘Towards a holistic approach to labour migration and mobility’ (THAMM), financed by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (2019-2024, €12.5 million for Tunisia), which aims to support labour migration governance in the region as well as to set up or expand mobility schemes of workers to Europe. Pilot programmes have already taken place in Germany and Belgium and France might soon join. The project also includes technical assistance on drafting a National Strategy for International Employment and designing employment policies. The project could be built on as part of efforts to launch a Talent Partnership with Tunisia, as per Member States’ interests.
- The EU budget also supports programmes on circular migration targeting Tunisians, such as HOMERe in the case of France (€1 million) and Mentor II in the case of Italy (€3.1 million).

ANNEX II

Member States' bilateral engagement

Austria – has a bilateral readmission agreement, but is generally not satisfied by the cooperation with Tunisia, due to issues related to identification, such as delays in response time and the fact that interviews are not performed for persons without documents. Austria has a number of bilateral projects, including: support to UNHCR's humanitarian aid efforts (€2 million in 2020, similar plans for 2021); capacity building in border management (training centre, contribution of €990 000 to a project co-funded by Denmark and Germany and implemented by ICMPD); support to livelihoods and perspectives (through the Harraga project, which aims to create opportunities for young people, deter from irregular migration and help victims of human trafficking; also considering a new project aiming at creating entrepreneurship opportunities to curb migration); information campaigns targeting migrants (supported in the past and considering again).

Belgium – has a bilateral readmission agreement with the country; cooperation is however fluctuating between excellent and (as during the first trimester 2021 when many readmission cases were answered) more challenging periods, due to long response answers to identification requests and the refusal by Tunisia to accept charter flights. In addition to being a stakeholder in the 2014 Mobility partnership, Belgium signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Tunisia in 2018. This MoU contains 2 parts: cooperation in the fields of security, civil protection, crisis management and the fight against radicalism; and legal migration, voluntary return, reintegration but also identification and readmission. The results on the two last points are still below Belgian expectations, with agreed identification procedures that are not respected or delayed by bureaucratic red tape. In terms of legal channels/pathways, Belgium has been supporting pilot projects that facilitate the mobility of Tunisians: (1) a circular migration project piloted by the Belgian Immigration Office and implemented by IOM, relying on the multidimensional cooperation of different stakeholders (e.g. immigration office, public employment services and employers' associations) to successfully provide recent Tunisian graduates with an internship in Belgium and job seeking support upon return to Tunisia; (2) the European THAMM project (Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa).

Czech Republic – The Aid in Place Programme has already financially supported the Regional Development and Protection Programme for North Africa with CZK 10 million (€0.4 million) in 2015 and 2019.

Denmark – is currently running a capacity building project in border management in Tunisia. It provides support for a training facility for integrated border management in Southern Tunisia. The implementing partner is the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). The purpose of the project is to establish a training centre for integrated border management and to develop training materials and curriculums to the training facility. The training centre is being established in Nefta in Southern Tunisia and will focus on operational and practical border training, e.g. patrolling in the southern desert environment and using Tozeur International Airport for training in air border tasks. The

Tunisian partners are the National Guard, Border Police and Customs authorities. The project is co-financed by Austria. Project duration: 36 months (2020-2022).

France – Bilateral relations are characterised by a regular and multidimensional dialogue. Beside high-level visits (President, PM, ministers), the High Council on Cooperation takes place every other year under the presidency of the prime ministers, and covers all aspects of cooperation: economy, education and university, health, development aid, culture, governance, security, migration. Cooperation on migration is based since 2008 on a framework agreement on coordinated management of migration and development (AGCFM). This framework, together with bilateral aid in the area of border management and biometrics, has enabled considerable progress in cooperation on returns and readmission. Tunisia was the first partner in the Maghreb region to restart cooperation on returns in 2020 after COVID 19-related restrictive measures were introduced.. In parallel, France has worked to facilitate mobility of professionals and met the targets fixed in the bilateral framework. This work includes participation in the EU-funded pilot project on legal migration 'THAMM'.

Germany – has a bilateral readmission agreement and is satisfied with the performance of biometric identification, but is concerned that no other means of identification are used for persons not registered in the Tunisian database. Germany implements a multitude of projects in Tunisia with a direct or indirect link to migration and mobility. These also include actions in development cooperation and supporting stabilisation efforts. In the area of border management, Germany provides equipment (speedboats and lifeboats, vehicles, light masts, etc.) as well as training. Germany supports initiatives on counter-smuggling (to strengthen a coordinated and more structured cooperation between the EU and several Middle East and North African countries, including Tunisia). Germany supports facilitation of knowledge and skill transfer from the Tunisian diaspora, as well as to diaspora entrepreneurs in founding start-ups that contribute to economic development in Tunisia. Returning and potential (irregular) migrants are part of the target group of a variety of projects to create employment opportunities for young Tunisians as a contribution to prevent irregular (re-) migration to Europe. Germany runs and participates in several pilots on regular labour migration of skilled workers and apprentices to Germany, including the EU-funded THAMM. The Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) has concluded a placement agreement with the Tunisian *Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant* (ANETI). The project relies on the so-called "triple-win approach" that is intended to benefit care workers, partner countries and Germany. In this cooperation project, the Central Placement Office (ZAV) of the Federal Employment Agency and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) try to attract skilled health and care workers and jointly place qualified nursing professionals from Tunisia (among other countries) in Germany. The country also provides advice and return counselling (e.g. reintegration scouts provide individual support measures for potential returnees). It provides advice and return / reintegration counseling via the migration advice centers in Tunis and Sfax as well as vocational training, entrepreneurship and employment promotion to support the reintegration of returning migrants (Programme Migration for Development, Returning to New Opportunities).

Greece – there is no bilateral readmission agreement with Tunisia. No interviews are conducted for the identification of Tunisian citizens: the collected data (ID cards, photocopies of passports, fingerprints, etc.) are sent to the Embassy of Tunisia in Athens and then are forwarded to the competent Tunisian authorities.

Italy – engages with Tunisia extensively and regularly; it has a bilateral readmission agreement with Tunisia, and has in place facilitated readmission procedures to return Tunisian nationals illegally landing on the Italian coasts. An Italian immigration liaison officer has been carrying out his tasks at the Italian Embassy in Tunis since 2016. Italy has operational cooperation in the area of maritime surveillance to prevent irregular migration and to enhance search and rescue capacity, based on a structured and quick exchange of information. Italy is involved in the Border Management Programme Maghreb (funded under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa) and is in this context in charge of delivering training courses and providing consultancy in defining technical specifications for procurement. In the area of border management, Italy also runs a programme providing training for Tunisian Police, Customs and Frontier agencies and supplying equipment (vehicles, naval maintenance, radar stations and surface radars, off-road vehicles, boats and engines, for a total value of € 138 million since 2011). The Tunisian Government submitted further requests for technical assistance related to border control, which were met in the two-year period (2017-2018) through a dedicated Fund for migration cooperation, for a total of €12 million. These have included the strengthening of the AFIS system (Automated Fingerprint Identification System), reparation and maintenance of six patrol boats of the National Guard, the supply of land transport vehicles, marine engines and radar devices to be assigned to the Police and the National Guard and training courses. In order to promote cooperation in the field of readmission, Italy has a dedicated Fund for specific programs in priority third countries of origin; in this framework Tunisian authorities will benefit from the maintenance of six patrol boats, non-military equipment to enhance border-control and anti-trafficking capacities, as well as reinforcement of socio-economic opportunities for Tunisian youth, in order to tackle root causes of irregular migration. Italy is negotiating a Framework Agreement "on concerted management of migration and joint development". Italy supports a number of projects in economic inclusion, contributing to the fight against the root causes of migration; these include initiatives targeting potential migrants, women and young people looking for jobs, promoting entrepreneurship and informing on the risks of irregular migration such as TRAIT D'Union (€1.3 million), INDIMEJ (€ 1.6 million), or CROLET (€ 1.6 million), that also focuses on capacity building for local authorities in Sidi Bouzil and Kebili. Italy also co-finances and leads the Regional Development and Protection Programme for North Africa (RDPP NA), providing documentation and Refugee Status Determination (RSD), capacity building, training sessions on mixed migration flows and international protection targeting Tunisian authorities. Italy also has a fund for migration cooperation (ca. € 10 million) that provides support to the Tunisian authorities' migration management efforts; finances a number of projects implemented by UN organisations on the ground (namely UNHCR, IOM and UNFPA) to sustain Tunisian capacities in reception and assistance of migrants and refugees; and contributes to IOM Assisted Voluntary Return operations from Tunisia. Finally, in terms of legal migration, Italy supports AMEM (Appui à la Migration Equitable pour le Maghreb, financed by AICS and led by ILO), that aims at improving workers' rights and enhancing labour migration management, and Y-MED (financed by Contributo Volontario Italiano and implemented by OIM), that aims at facilitating the training and job-placement of young people through a traineeship and circular migration programs.

Malta – signed a cooperation agreement on Security and Police matters with Tunisia on 6 April 2001 covering various areas of cooperation such as terrorism, transnational and organised crime, and drug trafficking. Moreover, there is an exchange of experience in education and training in police matters. The Armed Forces of Malta are ready to continue providing training through the Maritime Safety and Security Training Centre (MSSTC). The

MSSTC is part of the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) establishment and its role is to train AFM personnel working towards promoting and fostering inter-operability in the field of search and rescue and maritime law-enforcement.

The Netherlands – The Netherlands and Tunisia are currently looking for ways to deepen the political dialogue on migration. During ministerial and other high-level visits in recent years, migration has always been on the agenda. Dutch programs in Tunisia include ARISE (IOM), PROTECT II (IOM), Saving Lives and Finding Solutions (UNHCR), OFII, Tounesna PAD, UNDP support to INCLTP (as part of a broader rule of law program), the participation of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee in projects CIVIPOL and EUROGENDFOR with the Tunisia National Guard. The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee has a liaison officer for migration in Tunisia, who is also accredited for Libya. The Netherlands also addresses root causes through employment programs and enhancement of Rule of Law.

Portugal – Portugal has a broad cooperation agreement with Tunisia, since 2006, covering different areas, including prevention and fight against all forms of migration pressure; it holds regular high-level meetings. Various priorities have been identified in the cooperation with Tunisia, including environment, internal security, professional qualifications, labour mobility and circular migration. Accordingly, there are a number of agreements and MoUs already in force, while others are currently still being negotiated, namely the one concerning internal security and possibly covering other correlated areas. The agreement in the field of internal security also includes management of migratory flows and the fight against irregular migration and trafficking in human beings; border control procedures and systems; security documentation and document fraud; maritime rescue and training. The Portuguese Liaison Officer posted in Algeria had his duties extended to Tunisia in 2016, with the aim of strengthening police cooperation and boosting negotiations for the implementation of a Joint Action Plan, which will follow the entry into force of the internal security agreement. As a result of the meeting held between the Tunisian President and the Portuguese Minister for Home Affairs, in May 2021, the areas of border management and coastal control were identified for possible future cooperation between the two countries.

Slovenia – currently cooperates with Tunisia to provide scholarships in the form of development aid, which provide a legal mobility pathway for students pursuing higher education. Based on the development agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia regularly publishes public calls for scholarships for the study of citizens of different ODA-eligible countries in the Republic of Slovenia. Based on the call for Tunisian citizens published in 2011, applications were received only in 2018. Since 2019, two Tunisian citizens are receiving scholarships for doctoral studies in environmental science at the University of Nova Gorica, for the period of 2019-2023.

Spain – in 2020 the Spanish Ministry of Interior donated IT equipment to the Tunisian Ministry of Interior to strengthen the capabilities of the security units responsible for border management and the fight against irregular migration. Possibilities to enlarge bilateral migratory cooperation with Tunisia are under consideration.

ANNEX III

Key figures and trends
Irregular migration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Illegal border crossing of Tunisian nationals to the EU: 12 835 in 2021 as of 30 September, via the Central Mediterranean route. In the first three quarters of 2020, the number of Tunisians arriving to the EU stood at 9 959 (2 213 in 2019)• Irregular arrivals from Tunisia: In 2021 as of 30 September, 16 658 arrivals from Tunisia were registered to Italy (no arrivals to Malta), compared to 10 794 in the same period last year (3 136 in 2019)• Illegal stay of Tunisian nationals in the EU: 14 065 in 2020 (13 545 in 2019), of which 7 065 in France, 3 790 in Italy and 1 210 in Germany
Return
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tunisian nationals ordered to leave the EU: 12 820 in 2020 (11 980 in 2019) of which 6 935 in France, 3 790 in Italy, 535 in Spain• Return rate: 13% in 2020 (22% in 2019)• Highest return rate in 2020: 67% in Romania, 43% in Germany, 27% in Greece• Lowest return rate in 2020¹: 1.9% in Spain, 4.6% in Belgium, 6.2% in France
Asylum
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First time asylum applications by Tunisian nationals: 2 690 in 2020 (3 640 in 2019) of which 1 000 in Italy, 415 in Germany and 270 in France• First Instance asylum decisions: 2 470 in 2020 (2 910 in 2019)• EU recognition rate excluding humanitarian protection: 4.7% in 2020 (3.8% in 2019)• EU recognition rate incl. humanitarian protection: 5% in 2020 (4.1% in 2019)
Legal migration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First time residence permits: 30 831 in 2019 of which 19 652 in France, 3 640 in Germany, 3 530 in Italy – No available data for 2020• Total valid residence permits: 386 912 in 2019 of which 235 866 in France, 99 774 in Italy and 29 095 in Germany – No available data for 2020
Visas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short stay visa applications to the EU: 69 549 in 2020 (247 563 in 2019)²• Share of Multiple Entry Visas (MEVs): 39.3% in 2020 (39.6% in 2019). Top three Member States of Multiple Entry Visa issuance in 2020: France (35 122), Germany (4 744) and Italy (3 382)

¹ No decisions on return were issued in the following countries in EE, IE, LV, LT, MT and SI.

² The substantial decrease in 2020 was due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Visa refusal rate: 29% in 2020 (24.3% in 2019)

Asylum/International Protection in Tunisia and hosting forcibly displaced

- According to UNHCR, as of 30 June 2021, there were 8 465 refugees and asylum seekers in Tunisia. Of these, 3 511 are from Cote d'Ivoire, 2 135 from Syria, 1 034 of unknown nationality, 468 from Guinea, 417 from Cameroon and 900 of other nationalities.³

³ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/tun>