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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 Côte d'Ivoire

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 Côte d'Ivoire

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

1 – Key migration features

Côte d'Ivoire nationals as migrants to the EU

- More than 80 000 Ivoirian nationals are legally residing in the EU. Legal migration mainly concerns France followed by the USA and Italy. The visa non-issuance rate in 2014 was around 26,4%. More recently, there is an increase in the number of visas delivered by France and the non-issuance rate is significantly lower than from other Member States.
- In 2015 2 776 Ivorian nationals were found irregularly present in the EU which was an increase from 1 882 in 2014. Irregular border crossings mainly to Italy involved in 2015 4 942 people compared to 2 015 crossings in 2014. Other most affected Member States were France, Belgium and The Netherlands. The return rate was 12,1% in 2014, with 3 470 return decisions issued (2020 by France followed by Spain 450, and over 200 by the Netherlands and Belgium) and 420 returns taking place.

Migrant situation in Côte d'Ivoire

- Côte d'Ivoire is a sub-regional pole of economic growth (over 8%) but poverty affects half of the population. The country suffered a serious post electoral crisis in 2011. President Ouattara was re-elected in October 2015, with a strong mandate to pursue his reform agenda and national reconciliation.
- Côte d'Ivoire is a recipient of important sub-regional migration; foreigners living in Côte d'Ivoire represent about 6 million people (20-25% of the population). Migration is a sensitive issue, the issues of Ivoirian identity and land conflicts involving migrants' access to land is one of the root causes of conflicts.

2 - Relations with the EU

General

- Relations with the EU are good, there is progress on fundamental values and democratic principles are respected. The EU and Côte d'Ivoire have long-standing political, cooperation and trade relations, framed by the agreements between the EU and the ACP countries. Côte d'Ivoire has important trade relations with the EU, has signed the EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and is looking forward to its implementation. The country also offers opportunities to EU investments.
- Côte d'Ivoire plays an active role in ECOWAS, is a partner under the Rabat Process and is also taking part in the EU-ACP Dialogue on Migration and Development, although not really active.

Migration relations Côte d'Ivoire-EU

- The EU maintains high level political dialogue under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement, through meetings between EU Heads of Mission and Ministers and senior officials (regular meetings, ad hoc meetings, etc.). The last political dialogue took place in June 2015. No dedicated high-level dialogue on migration has recently taken place between the EU and Côte d'Ivoire.
- President Ouattara showed openness to cooperation at the Valletta summit but also stressed its own interest and role as recipient country of sub-regional migration. Côte d'Ivoire is not eligible to the EU Emergency Trust Fund, except projects with a regional dimension. EU cooperation already addresses some root causes of irregular migration through its support to Côte d'Ivoire stability, reconciliation, employment, land use, and security reforms.
- Bilateral meeting between Commissioner Mimica and Prime Minister Duncan took place in December 2015. While taking note on EU concerns on returns, the Prime Minister stressed the regional role of his country as recipient of sub-regional migration, he also mentioned the unemployment, especially affecting youth and the need to increase investment and jobs.

Migration relations Côte d'Ivoire-EU Member States

- There is no EU formal readmission agreement with Côte d'Ivoire beyond article 13 of the Cotonou Agreement. Member States report difficulties in cooperation on return and readmission. Main issues concern the lack of identity documents, and when systematic checks of identity are needed with central authorities for persons with valid identity documents.

- The National Development Plan 2016-2020 of Côte d'Ivoire has planned the creation of a complete biometric database of the population.
- The Netherlands is in the process of negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding and Italy negotiated in November a technical agreement on cooperation on border management, migration and return, which has not yet been signed.

3 - Key interests of the country and the EU

Interests of the country

- Côte d'Ivoire is interested in facilitated legal migration and mobility, including business and student visa.
- The country has a strong agenda for economic growth and regional integration. Attracting additional foreign direct investment, in particular in the agri-food sector, is part of this agenda. Remittances represent only 1.5% of Côte d'Ivoire GDP (2014).
- Interest exists also in addressing the root causes of irregular migration such as youth unemployment, vocational training. There is also interest in obtaining support to address the issues of under-qualified regional immigrants.
- Côte d'Ivoire has voiced interest in benefitting from the EU Emergency Trust Fund and has presented three projects in La Valletta (regional information centre on migration, diaspora forum and rural development at the border with Mali).

Interests of the EU

- Obtain Côte d'Ivoire engagement on addressing irregular migration, cooperation on return and reintegration, and improving border management.
- EU interest is to observe a significant increase in return rates as well as a reduction of the number of irregular entries into the EU.
- Promote Côte d'Ivoire stability and social cohesion (includes the challenge of sustainable demography), as well as its important role as regarding regional migration.

4 - Possible components of an EU incentives package¹

- Dialogue at top level and recognition of Côte d'Ivoire's regional role are among possible incentives for closer dialogue and cooperation. The issue of regional security and cooperation on terrorist threats can be expected to gain in importance.

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

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- On visa facilitation, there is possibility to progress in the framework of ongoing discussion in EU-ACP visa sub-group and holding regional seminar under the framework of the Rabat process in Cabo Verde in November 2016.
- Addressing root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement can be covered by the 11th EDF (EUR 273 million to support good governance, agriculture and energy), IcSP and other financial instruments through new programmes on employment, security and border control; gender dimension (demography), reliable civil registry, an update of the migration profile.
- Côte d'Ivoire could accede to support under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for projects with a regional dimension, if Trust Fund Board agrees on the project.
- Given strong economic growth of Côte d'Ivoire, EU development aid loses gradually in importance (EUR 273 million for 2014-2020), while offering opportunities to step up dialogue. EU Joint Programming offers an opportunity for coordination of support while expressing a key signal of a joined up approach from the EU and its MS to continue supporting politically Cote d'Ivoire's path to consolidate middle income status.
- Extension of ongoing EIB cooperation might be considered. The 'Energos' project starts in 2016 (EUR 170 million including EIB loan). The second phase should promote the use of renewable energy.
- Enhance policy dialogue aiming at improving the business climate with a view to attract private sector investment.
- Enhance 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).
- Increased cooperation on fisheries could be considered. An agreement is in place on EU tuna catches in the Côte d'Ivoire economic zone (EUR 680 000/year). Stepping up of the agreement could be explored.
- Supporting Côte d'Ivoire's climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience programmes.
- Trade and investment ties reflect mutual EU and Côte d'Ivoire interests could be further developed.
- 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

- Due to the good relationships of the EU with the country and the influence that the country can exert in regional and international fora, the leverages are identified in this fiche in areas on which the country has regularly expressed interest. To be noted that a considerable part of the positive incentives lie in Member States competence.
- A well balanced approach, combining collective EU firm messaging with a package of positive incentives seems advisable. However, the EU and its MS should stand equally ready collectively to consider some of the elements outlined in the fiche as possible negative incentives, having in mind the potential impact this could have on EU interest and other policies' objectives.

6 - Proposed next steps

- Include migration in the agenda of next article 8 political dialogue.
 - Possible technical mission to address pending issues including return and readmission (to be led by EU and interested Member States in April 2016).
 - High-level dialogue, possibly by the Dutch MFA on behalf of the EU (1st semester 2016).
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