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**NOTE**

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From: Commission Services  
To: Delegations

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

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

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

## Draft Action Plan: Niger

<b>Overall EU Objectives – Lines to Take</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EU remains firmly engaged in Niger and supports the consolidation of the democratic institutions, the strengthening of the rule of law and good governance, and promotes greater stability, security, equality and shared prosperity.</li> <li>• The EU encourages reforms to strengthen state institutions, reforms in the fields of governance (state modernisation, capacity building for democratic institutions, devolution and decentralisation, public finance management, security and justice, anticipation and management of crises), education and vocational training, and the development of a green economy based on inclusive growth, allowing socio-economic inclusion, particularly for youth.</li> <li>• Restoring stability and peace and combating terrorism remain core priorities of the EU's engagement in Niger and the Sahel. The EU stands ready to help strengthen Niger's efforts to combat terrorist and armed groups, in cooperation with the CSDP mission, EUCAP Sahel Niger, but also in the context of the Sahel Alliance, the Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel (2019) and the International Coalition for the Sahel (2020).</li> <li>• As an important country of transit and to a lesser extent origin, as well as a destination for circular migration in the ECOWAS area, the EU recognises Niger's efforts to tackle irregular migration and will continue assisting Niger in implementing its legal and political framework on migration and forced displacement. It will work with the government in implementing the Valletta Action Plan to address the root causes of irregular migration and instability, strengthen migration governance and border management, as well as protection for refugees, internally displaced persons and other persons of concern, and promote alternatives to migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.</li> <li>• Renewed efforts are necessary to address Niger's demographic dynamics, focusing on enhanced opportunities for education and youth employment through private sector development, the promotion of gender equality, women's rights and girls' education.</li> </ul>
<b>Goals for managing migration and addressing forced displacement – Lines to Take</b>
<p><b>Protection and support to host countries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is crucial that the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM), established by the African Union–EU–United Nations Tripartite Taskforce on the Situation of Stranded Migrants and Refugees in Libya, continue to operate. The EU has high appreciation for Niger's readiness to temporarily host vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers evacuated from Libya with a view to their resettlement or admission via complementary pathways and will continue providing its support to the mechanism.</li> <li>• The Commission has continuously called on Member States to provide, and deliver on pledges to resettle vulnerable refugees via ETM Niger. This will remain a priority for resettlement to the EU also in the period 2021/2022.</li> <li>• Given the magnitude and increase of several forced displacement challenges, the EU will aim to continue providing multi-sector humanitarian assistance to displaced populations and vulnerable host communities in Niger affected by conflicts, disasters, climate related events, or epidemics. This could be done through rapid response mechanisms and other emergency humanitarian interventions in protection, health, food, nutrition water and shelter, and education, along with development assistance, well-articulated with the humanitarian interventions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Migration governance and management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EU will work in close partnership with the Nigerien government to help it implement its recent Migration Action Plan for 2020-2035, as underlined at the last meeting of the Dialogue on Migration (Cadre de Concertation Migration) on 6 August 2021.</li> </ul>

- In support of this action plan, the EU aims to focus its financial and technical assistance and capacity-building support on: strengthening migration management and asylum, improving the protection of IDPs, refugees and persons of concern and the resilience of host communities (with a focus on persons evacuated from Libya as well as irregular migrants transiting through or returning to Niger); enhancing Niger's operational capacity to fight criminal networks; developing economic alternatives to a smuggling-based economy while supporting forcibly displaced persons; and supporting Niger in reaping the benefits of legal migration and freedom of movement via regional (ECOWAS) and African economic integration opportunities.
- Niger has been a strong and reliable partner for the EU in addressing irregular migration and migrant smuggling. To support Niger's efforts, the EU will aim to strengthen the promotion of economic opportunities in migration-affected areas in Niger (Agadez Region) and regions affected by forced displacement (Maradi, Tillabéri regions).
- The EU and Member States will continue implementing a Common Operational Partnership and the Joint Investigation Team aimed at countering migrant smuggling, as well as trafficking in human beings, in Niger.
- Respect for human rights will continue to be an essential part of EU's support to Niger in the areas of migration management, forced displacement and the fight against human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

#### **Whole of route/regional cooperation**

- The Commission intends to step up border management support at Libya's Southern border, while in parallel strengthening cross-border cooperation between Libya and its bordering countries in the South, including Niger.
- In this context and in line with Niger's new Migration Action Plan, the EU will also aim to facilitate the conclusion of negotiations for working arrangements between EUCAP Sahel Niger and EUBAM Libya, on the one hand, and Frontex on the other. These working arrangements could help the Governments of Niger and Libya shore up border management at their mutual land border.
- In light of the considerable deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel and political instability in neighbouring Chad, Mali and Libya, Niger remains a key partner in the Sahel in terms of addressing migration, notably as a transit country from West Africa towards Libya and Algeria, and further to the Mediterranean. The EU will seek to upgrade its close cooperation with Niger to address regional challenges related to migration and border management, such as migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.

#### **Legal migration**

- While North Africa remains a priority region for pilot projects on labour migration remains, the geographical scope of future Talent Partnerships should be broad and, if appropriate, opportunities should be sought for Niger and other countries in the Sahel.

#### **Measures**

- **Political engagement** takes place under the EU's new Integrated Strategy in the Sahel (April 2021) and the post-Cotonou Agreement. The need to give a new impulse to the EU-Niger partnership in the context of the new Sahel strategy, and the key role of Niger for the security and stability in the Sahel were part of the discussions between the newly elected President Bazoum and HRVP Borrell as well as Commissioner Urpilainen (April 2021), the President of the European Council (May 2021) and the EU Special Representative for the Sahel (June 2021).
- **EU-Niger High-Level Dialogue on migration** was launched on 18 September 2015, focusing on migration management and the fight against irregular migration, border management, the fight against migrant smuggling as well as trafficking in human beings, protection of migrants and the hosting of evacuees from Libya (via ETM), and tackling the root causes of irregular migration.
- **Frontex liaison officer** deployed in 2017.
- **EUCAP Sahel Niger** mission was enlarged in July 2015 including a new objective on

migration. The EUCAP field office in Agadez opened in April 2016.

- **Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM):** Since November 2017, vulnerable refugees have been evacuated from Libya to Niger in view of their resettlement and admission via complementary pathways. ETM operates under the auspices of UNHCR and is supported by the EU.
- **EU-IOM Joint Initiative for the protection and reintegration of migrants in Africa:** Since 2016, operations in Niger have saved and rescued over 31 000 stranded migrants in the desert. With over 42 000 vulnerable migrants have received direct assistance in transit centres and return and reintegration to their countries of origin, Niger remains one of the most important transit countries in the frame of this programme covering 26 countries.
- **Funding activities over the period 2014-2020:** The **EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa** has financed projects to enhance stability and address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement: €288.4 million contracted in Niger (governance €120.4 million; employment €87.1 million; migration management €54 million; resilience EUR 26.9 million). In addition, EU **humanitarian aid** in Niger has reached €247.2 million between 2014 and 2020. The main actions included funding life-saving activities in protection, health, food security, nutrition, water, shelter and education in emergencies. The EU has committed €716 million under the **European Development Fund** for the National Indicative Programme for Niger, including direct budgetary support. Bilateral cooperation under the 11th European Development Fund focused on food security, nutrition and resilience; social policies (including education, security, governance and peace consolidation); and enhancing road access to areas affected by insecurity. All these elements contribute to tackling the root causes of irregular migration and improving migration management. Under the **African Peace Facility**, the EU has provided strong support to the *G5 Sahel* and its Joint Force, including the police component, on the rule of law aspects of military operations.
- **Future funding from EU budget under Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027:** The draft Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for Niger is under preparation, its contents and allocations will be shared once available. Tentatively it can be expected that it would address priority issues such as governance, education and technical and vocational training, growth and the green economy. Migration and forced displacement could be addressed both through the bilateral MIP for Niger and through the regional MIP for sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Member States' bilateral engagement (see Annex II).** Niger will be included in the **Team Europe** initiative supporting comprehensive approach to migration management and governance along the **Central Mediterranean** put forward 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. A separate Team Europe initiative on the **Western Mediterranean/Atlantic** migration route, proposed by Spain, also includes Niger among potential partner countries.

A proposal for two Team Europe initiatives on Governance, Peace and Rights and Inclusive and Green Economic Growth for Nigerien youth will promote an integrated approach and support the strengthening of the state, stabilisation, economic opportunities and education with components on preventing irregular migration, enhancing protection and combating transnational crime by armed groups and criminal networks, and promoting economic alternatives to the smuggling-based economy.

#### **Timelines for action**

##### **A. Next Steps for engagement by EU and by Member States**

- **Dialogue on Migration with the Government (Cadre de Concertation Migration):** This forum met for the first time in two years on 6 August 2021 and is expected to meet again in six months' time. It brings together the Nigerien government with international donors,

including the EU, and discussed at its last meeting the Nigerien government's new Migration Action Plan for 2020-2035.

- **The European Asylum Support Office** has established contacts with the Government of Niger and will implement a regional pilot project on asylum also covering Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. This regional pilot capacity-building project in the framework of the Regional Development and Protection Programme in North Africa has a tentative budget of €2.13 million for 2020-2023 with contributions from Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Czech Republic.
- **EUCAP Sahel Niger-Frontex working arrangement:** Expected to be signed in 2021, it aims to enable both EU actors to provide closer technical and operational support to the Government of Niger to enhance border management at its southern and northern land borders, with an impact on migration flows from sub-Saharan Africa, forced returns from Algeria and the management of Niger's land border with Libya.
- **Rabat Process:** Niger is a member of the Rabat Process. The EU has sought to use this forum to address regional issues linked to mixed migration flows from sub-Saharan Africa via Niger to North Africa. Upcoming meetings include: 14-15 September 2021, thematic meeting on Local Authorities, National Authorities and Migration in Paris; 29 September 2021, Rabat Process steering committee; 13-14 October 2021, study visit in Geneva on protection and asylum; 17-18 November 2021, Senior Officials Meeting in Malabo; 16-17 December 2021, thematic meeting on legal migration in Lisbon.

#### **B. Next steps for funding measures**

- **NDICI-Global Europe – country/regional MIPs:** Second high-level geopolitical dialogue with the European Parliament (October 2021 tbc); Comitology procedure (October/November 2021); adoption of Multiannual Indicative Programmes (December 2021).
- **Team Europe Initiative on the Atlantic/Western Mediterranean Route,** next steps: the Commission will share the list of indicative contributions from interested Member States. **Team Europe Initiative on the Central Mediterranean Route,** next steps: The Commission will prepare a revised concept note and compile the list of indicative contributions and share them with EU Member States (mid-September; tbc). Both TEIs are expected to be validated at the meeting of Development DGs in October as part of the first batch of regional TEIs.

## ANNEX I

### Existing EU cooperation and areas of engagement under the New Pact

#### i. Asylum / international protection / humanitarian aid

- Promoting the protection for refugees, internally displaced persons and other persons of concern. This includes the capacity building of national stakeholders on protection to provide a protective environment and the provision of direct assistance (access to health facilities water and sanitation, land or shelter) for forced displaced persons with possibilities of resettlement;
- Enhancing the resilience of host communities, refugee populations and internally displaced persons; Specific actions focussing on access to justice, basic services and employment opportunities, and promoting peace building and reconciliation among host communities and forced displaced persons.
- An Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in Niger was established in November 2017, under the African Union–EU–United Nations Tripartite Taskforce on the Situation of Stranded Migrants and Refugees in Libya. Operating under the auspices of UNHCR and supported by the EU (co-funding contribution from the EU Trust Fund of €45 million); the ETM serves as a primary mechanism to resettle or provide complementary legal pathways to vulnerable refugees evacuated from Libya. Under the mechanism, 3 318 persons have been evacuated from Libya to Niger since 2017.
- EU humanitarian aid in Niger included life-saving activities in protection, health, food security, nutrition, water and shelter and education, well-articulated with development programme. The Rapid Response Mechanisms aimed at providing multisector emergency humanitarian aid to forcibly displaced population amount to about €8 million in 2021. In the last three years, the amount of funds dedicated to humanitarian protection has reached €5 million in Niger.
- Under MFF 2014-2020, actions under the Regional Development and Protection Programme in North Africa (RDPP) have included the provision of literacy courses and informal teaching for refugees and asylum-seekers, individual consultancy services and psychological and medical assistance. At Zinder (at Niger's southern border with Nigeria), this has included providing support for victims of trafficking; at Assamaka, Arlit and Agadez (close to the Algerian border and along a key migration route through Niger), it has included the construction of new facilities, help with registration and the distribution of food and non-food items to persons in need. Nigerien authorities have also received specialised training to address the needs of victims of trafficking and those forcibly returned from Algeria.

#### ii. Addressing root causes

- Wide range of external relations instruments deployed in bilateral cooperation focused on food security, nutrition and resilience; enhancing state capacities for the implementation of social policies (education, health); security, governance and peace consolidation; and enhancing road access to areas affected by insecurity.
- The EU has committed €716 million under the 11<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund (2014-2020) National Indicative Programme for Niger, including direct budgetary support. The EU Emergency Trust Fund has financed projects to enhance stability and address the root causes of migration and forced displacement.

#### iii. Migration governance and management

- Under MFF 2014-2020, the EU provides, under the EU Trust Fund, around €380 million worth of financial and technical assistance and capacity-building support for Niger in the areas of: i)

strengthening migration and border management; ii) enhancing operational capacity to fight criminal networks; iii) improving the protection of IDPs, refugees and persons of concern via resettlement and reintegration, as well as the resilience of the forcibly displaced persons and host communities, with a focus on the status of persons of concern evacuated from Libya and those forcibly returned from Algeria; iv) developing economic alternatives to the smuggling-based economy while supporting forcibly displaced persons; iv) reaping the benefits of legal migration and freedom of movement via regional (ECOWAS) and African economic integration opportunities.

#### *Countering Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings*

- Common Operational Partnership (COP) against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings with an EU contribution of €7.5 million under MFF 2014-2020 is managed by a consortium of partners from Austria as its main coordinator and has France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and Interpol as members. It engages the competent authorities of African countries, regions and organisations, with a focus on Ivory Coast, Guinea, Tunisia, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and AFRIPOL and a working package involving Niger.
- Under MFF 2014-2020, the Rapid Economic Impact Action Plan in Agadez (PAIERA – €8 million), as well as the programme for the stabilisation and socio-economic strengthening of populations affected by irregular migration in transit zones in Niger (€7.6 million) propose accompanying measures in parallel with the police and judicial measures taken by the Government of Niger in relation to irregular migration. The objectives are (i) to initiate a dialogue with the main actors of irregular immigration channels, to sensitise them on the State policy in this field, and on the risks linked to trafficking, (ii) to study and formulate reconversion options, and to offer employment and socio-professional integration opportunities to economic actors who benefit directly or indirectly from the financial spin-offs linked to migrants, and (iii) to support assistance to migrants and access to priority basic services and economic opportunities to transit and return communities, while promoting community cohesion.
- Several African countries, including Niger, have partnered up with EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats) projects in the period 2018-2021, notably its Facilitation of Illegal Immigration component. The EMPACT EU crime priority on the Facilitation of Illegal Migration is driven by Greece and counts as members Austria, Italy, Germany, Spain, Europol and Frontex. Europol, with its European Migrant Smuggling Centre, and Frontex play an important supporting role. Eurojust, INTERPOL, EUNAVFORMED Irini and Euromed Police are participating, with the Commission as a supporting partner.
- Joint Operational Team (JOT) Dunqett, under the EMPACT priority on the facilitation of illegal immigration aims to dismantle organised crime groups involved in migrant smuggling and exchange operational information and best practices among law enforcement authorities. It extends to Western and North African countries impacted by migrant smuggling networks; Niger is associated. Important analytical work is also conducted on smuggling trends, including concealment methods and digital smuggling.

#### *Awareness raising*

- Information and awareness raising campaigns in North and Western Africa are supported with €5.5 million under MFF 2014-2020. Current campaigns cover target audiences in Niger, Tunisia, Mali, The Gambia, Ivory Coast, and Senegal.

#### **iv. Returns, readmission, reintegration**

- The EU-IOM Joint Initiative, launched in December 2016 with funding from the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, is a comprehensive programme to save lives, protect and assist migrants along key migration routes in Africa. It enables migrants who wish to return to their countries of origin to do so in a safe and dignified way, in full respect of international human rights

standards. It covers 26 African countries, including Niger, and has assisted 42 000 migrants to return from Niger to their home countries and provided reintegration assistance for 11 000 migrants following their arrival in Niger since May 2017.

- The return of Nigerien nationals from the EU is only a minor aspect of the EU's overall migration partnership with Niger.

v. **Legal migration and mobility**

- Under the last call for proposals for pilot projects on labour migration launched on 28 February 2020, the priority remained North Africa. The geographical scope of future Talent Partnerships should be kept wide and, if appropriate, opportunities should be sought for Niger and other countries in the Sahel.

## **ANNEX II**

### **Member States' bilateral engagement (EUMS to provide)**



## ANNEX III

<b>Niger: Key figures and trends</b>
<b>Irregular migration</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illegal border crossing of Nigerien nationals to the EU: 30 in 2020 (44 in 2019) of which 18 in Italy, 11 in Malta and 1 in Greece</li> <li>• Illegal stay of Nigerien nationals in the EU: 325 in 2020 (405 in 2019) of which 140 in France, 110 in Germany, 20 in Belgium and 20 in Spain</li> </ul>
<b>Return</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nigerien nationals ordered to leave the EU: 280 in 2020 (330 in 2019) of which 150 in France, 50 in Germany and 45 in Belgium</li> <li>• Return rate: 7% in 2020 (11% in 2019)</li> </ul>
<b>Asylum</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First time asylum applications: 235 in 2020 (445 in 2019) of which 65 in France, 45 in Belgium and 40 in Germany</li> <li>• First instance asylum decisions: 280 in 2020 (435 in 2019)</li> <li>• EU recognition rate excluding humanitarian protection: 12.5% in 2020 (30% in 2019)</li> <li>• EU recognition rate including humanitarian protection: 16% in 2020 (31% in 2019)</li> </ul>
<b>Forced displacement in Niger</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to UNHCR, as of 30 June 2021, there were 319 895 IDPs and 245 451 refugees in Niger (refugees: 182 730 Nigerians, 61 211 Malians, 1 510 other)</li> </ul>
<b>Legal migration</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First time residence permits: 884 in 2019 of which 513 in France, 131 in Germany and 89 in Belgium. No available data for 2020</li> <li>• Total valid residence permits: 5 869 in 2019 of which 2 506 in France, 1 344 in Italy and 1 019 in Belgium. No available data for 2020.</li> </ul>
<b>Visas</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short stay visa applications to the EU: 1 483 in 2020 (7 550 in 2019);</li> <li>• Share of Multiple Entry Visas (MEVs): 39.7% in 2020 (43.7% in 2019). Top two Member States of MEV issuance in 2020: France (1 089) and Spain (91)</li> <li>• Visa refusal rate: 17.7% 2020 (14.7% in 2019)</li> </ul>