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Statement of Heads of State or Government of _____ and the President of the European Commission

Faced with the various challenges of migration, we underline our full respect of the right to asylum and the fundamental values enshrined in international and European law, including the principle of non-refoulement. At the same time, it is crucial to further reduce illegal migration to Europe as well as secondary movements within the European Union.

We firmly believe that said challenges require close cooperation between the European Union and its Member States. Unilateral, uncoordinated measures would not only be less effective, but severely damage the process of European integration and put the achievements of Schengen at risk.

We do not start from scratch. Considerable progress has been achieved since 2015, best illustrated by the strong decrease of arrivals by sea along with a corresponding decrease in casualties. Progress has also been achieved on the reform of the Common European Asylum System, with five out of seven legislative proposals now being close to conclusion.

We renew our strong commitment to jointly advance European migration policy. We are determined to achieve progress in further reducing the number of illegal arrivals to the European Union in particular by means of strengthened external border protection, common, harmonised asylum procedures and intensified cooperation with transit countries as well as countries of origin. At the same time, we see a strong need to significantly reduce secondary movements, inter alia, by preventing unlawful crossing of internal borders between Member States by irregular migrants and asylum seekers and by ensuring swift readmissions by the competent Member State.

In line with the above convictions, we have agreed on the following:

I. External Dimension

- We will significantly intensify cooperation with third countries (in particular transit countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Niger and Tunisia) to further reduce arrivals to the European Union. This includes increased financial and material support for these countries for protection of land borders,

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prevention of departures at sea and the fight against smugglers. We will jointly advocate to ensure this priority is reflected in the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa projects.

- We regard EUNAVFORMED SOPHIA and Joint Operation Poseidon's contribution to prevent loss of life at sea and disrupt the business of human smuggling and trafficking as effective and will advocate continued engagement.
- We regard the development of the Libyan coast guard's ability to stop the departing boats and deny the smugglers activity as a key element to prevent illegal migration and commit to further encourage and support their activities.
- We will substantially strengthen UNHCR and IOM operations in Libya. We will further support IOM in facilitating intra-African returns and reintegration.
- With regard to readmission, we will broaden the negotiation framework with countries of origin, using legal migration pathways (vocational training, studies, work) and visa policy as leverage. We will apply adequate conditionality in our bilateral relations with them. Those of us best placed to do so commit to act, together with the European Commission, to take forward discussions with the third countries concerned.
- We will support and organise more protection and reception capacity outside the EU as well as resettlement (on a voluntary basis) while fully respecting legal guarantees in the field of asylum.
- We will cooperate better in dealing with Search and Rescue operations fully respecting international law and the responsibilities of States and work closely with other international institutions such as UNHCR and IOM [including through the creation of a regional disembarkation scheme].

II. **Protection of the European Union's external borders**

- We will substantially increase support for Member States with external borders in asylum assessment and returns (politically, financially, deployment of experts).
- We will ensure resolute external border protection. To this end, we support gradual staffing-up of the new European Border and Coast Guard (created by the EU in 2016 on the basis of Frontex) up to 10,000 by the end of 2020. The European Border and Coast Guard should also urgently enhance its ability to support returns from Member States with external borders. We strongly support the initiative of the Commission President to propose swiftly a new Regulation providing for a significant further operational stepping up of the European Border and Coast Guard, transforming it into a genuine EU border police capable of protecting external borders building on its own competences. We

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equally support the initiative of the President of the European Commission to propose the transformation of the European Asylum Support Office into a genuine EU asylum authority conducting asylum assessment and ensuring, at the external borders of the EU, together with the European Border and Coast Guard, the necessary close nexus between asylum and return procedures.

- As an immediate action, we commit to significantly strengthening European Border and Coast Guard operations at external borders by filling the gaps in the current operations notably the consistent shortfall in resources and equipment.

III. Internal Dimension

- We will counter secondary movements across internal borders, as there is no right to freely choose the Member State where to apply for asylum. We will prevent absconding of asylum applicants inter alia by the establishment of facilities to accommodate them and process their asylum requests immediately after arrival and to enforce readmission decisions with the support of the European Union and its Member States.
- With regard to reform of the Dublin Regulation, to abolish incentives for secondary movements, we will jointly advocate access to social assistance only in the responsible Member State as well as significantly accelerating legal remedies against Dublin return decisions in line with EU law.
- We commit to support a very swift completion of the reform of the Common European Asylum System, notably the Asylum Procedures Regulation and the Dublin Regulation, which should include an effective solidarity mechanism. Until then solidarity between Member States including relocation commitments and other commitments will be needed.
- In addition, we agree to take various practical measures to immediately reduce secondary movements.
 - a. We will establish flexible joint readmission mechanisms close to internal borders (persons who are denied entry in conformity with EU law, or voluntarily refrain from entering, to be brought back in in manner agreed between relevant partners).
 - b. We agree to control exit movements/outbound travel, notably at bus and train stations as well as airports (through both police and private transportation companies).
 - c. We will impose on asylum seekers (sanctionable) obligations to remain in competent Member State and certain parts thereof. We will inform asylum seekers accordingly and effectively enforce these obligations.

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- d. We will establish joint police centres against smugglers and smuggling networks (exchange information and analyses, coordinate measures).
 - e. We will conclude administrative arrangements under Art. 36 Dublin Regulation to expedite readmissions and transfers and end any time limits or contingents.
 - f. We will strengthen support (financial means and staff) for reception, accommodation, schooling, healthcare for migrants in Member States with external borders, as well as for asylum services. We call on the European Commission to present a needs assessment by July 2018.
- As an immediate step, we agree to promote common standards in the field of social assistance for asylum seekers and in asylum procedures as well as ensuring more coherence in our approach to asylum through enhanced use of EASO and advocating common EU lists of safe countries of origin.
 - We support the initiative of the European Commission to come forward with a legislative proposal to further strengthen and enhance the coherence and effectiveness of return policy (common conditions for voluntary and forced return, detention and timelines).

IV. **Implementation**

We appoint high-level representatives, supported by the European Commission, to arrange for further details. Their first meeting will take place in due course; monthly meetings will ensure continuous implementation. A follow-up to our meeting at the level of Heads of State or Government will be scheduled in autumn 2018.