

*“Faced with the tragedy of tens of thousands of refugees who are fleeing death by war and starvation and are on a path towards a life of hope, the Gospel is calling us, is asking us, to be close to the smallest and abandoned.”* Pope Francis, September 2015

On 11 and 12 November, African and European leaders are meeting in Valetta, Malta, to discuss migration and mobility in follow-up of the 2-3 April 2014 Fourth EU-Africa Summit in Brussels. Last year, the two regions agreed on two pages of neatly formulated concerns and intentions, and on a 5 pillar Action Plan for 2014-2017 without timetables, budgets or division of labor attached. We, as Catholic humanitarian and development organizations working on migration since the Network’s foundation are saddened and concerned about the extent of human suffering of refugees and migrants, who in the attempt to flee conflict, violence and extreme poverty are faced with hostility, violence and even death while trying to reach a place of security and hope. Meanwhile, we have seen the refugee crisis in Europe showcase the EU’s inability to develop a coordinated policy approach based on justice, human dignity and solidarity, be it on reception and relocation, on search and rescue in the Mediterranean, on a common asylum policy, and on stepping up its overseas development assistance, in particular funding for refugee support in the region and for addressing root causes of forced migration. We are particularly concerned by the fact that in opposition to the EU declared will to increase assistance towards developing countries, cooperation measures are more and more focused on return of migrants in their country of origin.

In his speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg last November, and responding to the images of hundreds of people drowning on the coast of Libya, Pope Francis warned lawmakers not to transform the Mediterranean Sea into a “vast cemetery”. The latest images of thousands of Syrians desperately trying to make their way through Turkey, Greece, the Balkans and Hungary to reach Western Europe, in the face of huge and even deadly obstacles, prompts us to add a new call for action.

The Valetta Summit comes at a critical juncture for the EU to build an alliance with its African counterparts and all stakeholders involved, including civil society. Numerous governments have so far not shown the leadership required to redress the flaws in governance and the rule of law that still prevent conflicts from being resolved peacefully and democratically. This dark record of continued human rights violations and impunity, and the many pockets of extreme poverty, hunger and inequality are examples of inadequate policies and the setting of wrong priorities. These are, amongst others, root causes for the migration flows we have observed in the past months. Collectively, the European and African states have signed up to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including explicit targets on safe and fair migration, eliminating human trafficking, ensuring decent work for migrant laborers, and on promoting and safeguarding the rights of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons. This is a landmark development and opportunity, and along with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Finance for Development, calling us to ensure its full and total implementation!

**Caritas calls for a comprehensive, long-term, integrated, concerted and balanced approach, whose objectives, policies and measures will be long-lasting.** The ultimate aims should be to eliminate forced displacement and unsafe migration, and facilitate and speed up safe, voluntary and legal mobility, while providing opportunities for potential migrants at home and protecting the human rights and dignity of migrants.

It is therefore high time to reshape and accelerate EU-African efforts and to ensure that the following measures are being agreed upon, adequately resourced and swiftly implemented:

**We urgently ask the European Union and its member states to:**

1. **Increase official development assistance from only 0,42% of Gross National Income (€58,2 billion) to the promised 0,7% of GNI.** Focus should be on fragile states and least developed countries.
2. At the same time, the EU should **decrease its share in military spending** (currently \$1.8 trillion globally) and use the remaining funds to support the UN in its actions to ensure peace in conflict zones. The proposed €1.8 billion trust fund for Africa to improve stability and address root causes of irregular migration flows should not be taken from existing (EDF) development resources.
3. **Refrain from using readmission and return clauses** in bilateral or regional agreements, ‘punishing’ African countries for non-admittance of African nationals by reducing development aid.
4. **Lift carrier sanctions as a means to prevent human smuggling and end dangerous sea crossings.** Establish more effective controls to crack down on smugglers operating inside the EU, so that victims are protected, and not criminalized. Meanwhile enhance the European search and rescue operations at EU external borders.
5. **Increase resettlement and relocation opportunities and provide not less than the number of places proposed by UNHCR.** Prioritize vulnerable people when resettling. Develop permanent and mandatory resettlement and relocation mechanisms to ensure responsibility sharing among EU member states.
6. **Elaborate a response mechanism which respects Human Rights of refugees to address mass arrivals** of persons in refugee situations at European borders to ensure access to international refugee protection and a sustainable opportunity to rebuild their lives. Ensure the respect of high humane standards regarding reception and long-term integration of migrants and asylum seekers.
7. **Create and guarantee adequate reception capacities, especially in Greece.** Devise alternatives to the Dublin rules to suppress the rule of the first country of arrival. Take into account family ties and interests of migrants and asylum seekers to determine in which country they should settle. Promote the mutual recognition between member states of the asylum decisions, and promote solidarity and responsibility sharing as key principles of the EU migration policies.
8. **Open more safe and legal channels for those seeking protection when fleeing war and persecution as well as legal channels for labour migration.** Remove practical obstacles of family reunification to give families the chance to remain together, either in their homes or where they migrate and/or to maintain family ties with those left behind. Promote circular migration including seasonal labor migration.
9. **Provide for issuing humanitarian visas at consulates and embassies.** Lift the visa requirement provisionally for asylum seekers originating from countries in war/conflict and where there are no embassies or consulates in order to facilitate regular entry of asylum seekers.
10. **Foster options for private sponsorship to allow access to EU territory on invitation by a legal resident in an EU state,** whether there are family links or in other circumstances (for example an NGO, a Church entity or a group of people living in the member state). This should not be considered as a general solution to the existing problems but rather as a ‘tool’ to be applied in special cases.
11. **Allow asylum seekers to work during the review of their asylum application.** Ensure the access of migrants to the labor market by facilitating the recognition of their qualifications attained in countries overseas. Provide migrants and asylum seekers with education, language and training opportunities.
12. **Promote alternatives to detention and coercive measures.** Avoid in all cases the detention of all migrants, in particular unaccompanied minors, pregnant women and adults with minors, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and on the best interest of the child regardless of her/his or parents’ migration status. Train police, border guard and other staff, i.e. social service providers, working with migrants and asylum seekers to ensure respect of human rights and human dignity.

***“It is our concern, that justice is done to all, that violence is stopped. That is why we do not only care for the concrete people at our borders, but also engage in reflection and study about the right of all people.”***  
– H.E. Luc Van Looy, President, and Mr. Jorge Nuño Mayer, Secretary General Caritas Europa, August 2015.

**We urgently ask the African Union and its member states to:**

13. **Adopt a national comprehensive policy on migration based on the AU Migration Policy Framework for Africa through inclusive National Consultative Conference;** the AU needs to develop an Implementation Roadmap for AU Migration Policy Framework for Africa.

14. **Establish appropriate national multi-stakeholder mechanisms that would bring together state and non-state actors engaged with migration and its root causes**, including civil society and the private sector, and including migrants and Diasporas.
15. **Work in concertation and common commitment to migration and development regardless of them being recipients, transit or originating countries.**
16. **Ensuring the effective protection of economic, social and cultural rights of migrants**, including the right to protection, is a fundamental component of comprehensive and balanced migration management systems. Safeguarding the human rights of migrants implies the effective application of norms enshrined in human rights instruments as well as the ratification and enforcement of instruments specifically relevant to the treatment of migrants.
17. **Step up efforts, including through the AU Peace and Security Council, on conflict prediction, prevention**, and response with focus on the structural causes of conflicts on the continent and to mobilize effective support of the African and international community for these efforts.
18. **Step up efforts in promoting democracy, good governance and the rule of law**, peaceful and fair electoral processes, including holding African leaders accountable to their own constitutions. Address political factors that cause, trigger and accelerate migration, including poor governance, nepotism and corruption, human rights violations and political instability.
19. **Address further root causes of migration, which include poor socio-economic conditions, such as low wages, high levels of unemployment, rural underdevelopment, poverty and lack of opportunity; environmental factors; population growth and scarce natural resources.**
20. **Strengthen educational systems and adapt them to the needs of each African country**; promote youth employment as a means to encourage young people to build up their lives and earn a decent living in close proximity to their roots; invest in economic activities such as fostering start-up initiatives of young people.
21. **Support joint research and education on migration and development** and thus strengthen the institutional capacity building of African countries on the management of migration, the understanding and management of the social and economic offsets of 'brain drain and brain gain' policies and practises.
22. **Promote free mobility within the various regimes of RECs and provide guidelines on the effective free mobility in Africa**; facilitate intra-African freedom of movement of manpower and migratory flows.
23. **Take specific measures to address migrant women's vulnerabilities**, such as providing shelter, developing referral systems and having especially trained border police and applying international standards to combat Human Trafficking and forced labour. Migrant women often become victims of slavery or labour exploitation, e.g. in the context of domestic service and the sex industry. Create mechanisms for strengthening links between the countries of origin and African communities in the Diaspora; encourage inputs from the Diaspora for the development of their countries of origin, in the form of trade and investment activities, transfer of funds, competencies, technologies, social and political values and by permanent or temporary participation in development projects.
24. **Invest in Civil Society Organisations for them to support and counsel potential migrants** with regard to risks and opportunities linked to migration. And create favourable conditions for those who return to their countries.

**“Caritas is present in countries of origin, transit and destination. There we work to eradicate poverty and hunger, we counsel migrants on legal matters, we support and assist them in their daily life, we react to emergency situation in working in reception centers. Based on our expertise, we believe that a more decisive and constructive action is required, one which relies on a universal network of cooperation, based on safeguarding the dignity and centrality of every human person. This will lead to greater effectiveness in the fight against the shameful and criminal trafficking of human beings, the violation of fundamental rights, and all forms of violence, oppression and enslavement.”** His Grace Gabriel Justice Yaw Anokye, President and Mr Albert Mashika, Regional Coordinator of Caritas Africa

**We urgently ask the European and African Union and all its member states to:**

1. **Tackle the root causes of forced and involuntary migration**, such as inequality and social injustice, poverty, unemployment, lack of development, climate and natural disasters, war and humanitarian crises.

2. **Promote a rights-based approach to migration and respect the rights of migrants**, especially children and women, regardless of their migration status. Protect their life and security during their migration journey. Strengthen efforts to eliminate discrimination, racism and xenophobia.
3. **Recognize migration as a transformative force for sustainable development**. Recognize and facilitate the role of migrants and Diasporas contributing to sustainable development in both their countries of origin and destination; reduce the costs of sending remittances home to 3% by 2020 at the very latest, and facilitate and encourage diaspora investments.
4. **Translate the newly agreed Sustainable Development Goals into national policies and legislation**, ensuring swift and full implementation and adequate resourcing. Ensure the development of national indicators to measure and report progress, including regular peer reviews at regional and international levels.
5. **Eliminate human trafficking and the perception of trafficked people as criminals not as victims of a crime**. Provide adequate supportive responses and treatment to victims of trafficking. Eliminate forced labor and crack down on unscrupulous labor recruitment agencies. Ratify and implement of international instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Protection of the rights of Migrant Workers and their Family Members (1990) and all other relevant (ILO) instruments.

**“It is necessary to respond to the globalization of migration with the globalization of charity and cooperation, in such a way as to make the conditions of migrants more humane. At the same time, greater efforts are needed to guarantee the easing of conditions, often brought about by war or famine, which compel whole peoples to leave their native countries. Solidarity with migrants and refugees must be accompanied by the courage and creativity necessary to develop, on a world-wide level, a more just and equitable financial and economic order, as well as an increasing commitment to peace, the indispensable condition for all authentic progress.”** Pope Francis, September 2014