

- EU STATEMENT-

Migration keeps on being a top priority in European Union's Agenda. Although there is a clear reduction in the numbers of irregular arrivals, better managing migration and preventing irregular flows still remain a real challenge for us all.

In this context, we will continue to strive to prevent the loss of lives during dangerous migratory journeys while offering protection to those in need, with particular attention to the most vulnerable people.

We will continue our efforts in fighting migrant smugglers, in line with the EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling, and address the root causes of irregular migration, while protecting our external borders and confirming that those who have no right to stay in the EU, should effectively return.

In parallel, the EU is determined to fully uphold its human rights obligations under international law. We believe that it is possible and necessary to better manage migration while respecting human rights standards.

Our policies are founded on the principles of non-discrimination, proportionality, non-refoulement, access to justice and the best interests of the child.

The importance of fundamental rights is taken into account in the European Union legislative work and policy initiatives, advocacy in capacity-building in Member States and third countries, and in its priorities for internal infringement actions.

The European Agenda on Migration of 2015 prioritises respect for human rights across each pillar of action. This is also true for the European Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) activities.

The EUNAVFOR MED Operation is being conducted in full compliance with international law, including the principle of non-refoulement. Advisers on human rights, refugee law and gender have been appointed to the operational headquarters; there is close cooperation with the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator; and personnel receive training on human rights and humanitarian law.

The EU wishes to reaffirm its support to the full implementation of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and recognises the central role it plays in the international legal order.

The EU has built a comprehensive legal and policy framework, along with a mandate of the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator. The EU has demonstrated a strong commitment to prosecute unscrupulous criminals, end the culture of impunity, prevent the crime and, most importantly, protect the victims and increase accountability towards them. In this context, the Commission presented in December 2017 a set of new priorities accompanied by a list of concrete measures to strengthen our ongoing actions against trafficking in human beings. Our actions are anchored around three priority areas: 1) Untangling the trafficking chain, 2) Provide better access to and realise the rights for victims and 3) Intensify a coordinated and consolidated response, both within and outside the EU:

We stand ready to work with our international partners towards eradicating trafficking in human beings.

Please allow me here to say a few words on the Positive impact of migration, as there is a certain level of worldwide misperception on migration issues that needs to be addressed.

The Global compact for migration is an opportunity to reorient the narrative against migrant towards a more accurate narrative on migration that recognises its overwhelmingly positive impact. The EU actively participated in the negotiations leading toward the adoption of the Global compacts on Migrants as well as on Refugees and we are committed to actively participate in its follow – up actions.

From the EU Institutions point of view, we recognise the positive contribution of migrants to inclusive growth and sustainable developments.

Lastly, please allow me to the close cooperation between the European and the ASEAN Senior Official Meeting for Transnational Crime (SOMTC), including our 5 years work plan, and our ongoing cooperation with ASEAN on Border Management, in cooperation with Interpol. Migration and labour issues, with a special focus on Women, will be the focus of a 25 million euro new programme in the ASEAN region to be implemented with ILO and UNWOMEN.

Thank you for your attention.

Francisco Fontan

European Union Ambassador to ASEAN