

JOINT DECLARATION ESTABLISHING A MIGRATION PARTNERSHIP
BETWEEN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF MAURITANIA AND THE
EUROPEAN UNION

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania (hereinafter ‘Mauritania’) and the European Union (hereinafter ‘the EU’),

1. CONCERNED by the regional context, characterised by growing instability and insecurity, and by the sharp increase in the number of irregular migrants, which is leading to suffering, abuse and various forms of exploitation, particularly for children and women, as well as the unacceptable loss of lives in the desert or at sea;
2. NOTING the large influx of refugees and asylum seekers into Mauritania, which is putting increasing pressure on socio-economic services, security and natural resources in host regions, with the potential to spark tensions with host communities;
3. CONSIDERING the impact of regional challenges on Mauritania, posing threats to its socio-economic stability and to its security, in particular as regards the terrorist threat and transnational organised crime;
4. RECOGNISING Mauritania’s strategic role and numerous efforts to contribute to regional stability, including its successful strategy as regards counter-terrorism, religious dialogue and the hosting of refugee populations;
5. WELCOMING the recent visit by Her Excellency Ursula Von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, and His Excellency Pedro Sánchez, Prime Minister of Spain, to Mauritania on 8 February 2024, and the joint press statement marking that visit;
6. AWARE of the high degree of interdependence between Africa and Europe when it comes to tackling shared challenges such as migration, and eager to combat the root causes of irregular migration by promoting democracy and human rights, eradicating poverty, supporting socio-economic development, including rural development, mitigating the effects of climate change and adapting to those effects;
7. RECOGNISING fully the benefits of well-coordinated migration and mobility management, both for the partners and for migrants and host populations, through its contribution to sustainable development and to human, economic, commercial and financial exchanges;

8. ACKNOWLEDGING the specific nature of Mauritania as a transit country and, increasingly, a country of final destination in terms of migration flows, and WELCOMING its laudable efforts to bring migration routes, including maritime routes, under control, to manage irregular migration and to combat cross-border networks of human traffickers and migrant smugglers, as well as its continued efforts to take in, protect and take care of refugees from the sub-region;
9. EXPRESSING their concern about the change in the modus operandi of migrant smuggling networks, which have become increasingly aggressive towards the Mauritanian and foreign fishing fleet operating in Mauritania's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and the impact of this on Mauritania's maritime security, economy and commitments;
10. RECOGNISING the renewed commitments made by Mauritania and the EU at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023;
11. RECOGNISING the importance of working together to prevent and combat criminal networks of migrant smugglers, within the framework of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, and in the spirit of the Call to Action on a Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling, which was launched by the European Commission at the International Conference on 28 November 2023;
12. RECALLING that Mauritania and the EU have a high-quality, deep and long-standing relationship, based on mutual trust and respect and guided by the principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility;
13. RECALLING, too, that this relationship is governed by the Samoa Agreement, which provides a framework for a strengthened political partnership to generate mutually beneficial outcomes on common and intersecting interests;
14. ACKNOWLEDGING that the issue of migration and forced displacement is a key element in their partnership, and that their cooperation on migration is guided by a comprehensive, coherent, pragmatic and balanced approach, with respect for human rights, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, as well as the principle of sovereignty of both parties;

15. ACTING in line with the regional and international consultative processes involving Mauritania and the EU, in particular the Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development (the Rabat Process), which plays an important role in the monitoring of the 2015 Joint Valletta Action Plan, the EU-Africa Dialogue and the 2018 Niamey Declaration;
16. DRAWING ON the priorities and strategic components of the respective migration policies/strategies of Mauritania and the EU, as well as their comprehensive approaches to migration and mobility issues;
17. RECALLING that the promotion, protection and respect of human rights, the rule of law and good governance are the foundations of Mauritanian and EU migration policy, and WELCOMING Mauritania's establishment in July 2022 of a national authority to counter human trafficking and migrant smuggling;
18. RECALLING also the quality of relations between Mauritania and the EU in the field of migration, and acknowledging the achievements of cooperation under the 11th European Development Fund, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI), as well as the relevant bilateral agreements and instruments;
19. REAFFIRMING their determination to further develop their cooperation on migration on the basis of a comprehensive and balanced approach that takes account of all migration-related issues on the basis of the priority areas identified in this declaration, in the spirit of mutual interest and respect;
20. REAFFIRMING that the prevention and control of irregular migration must be comprehensively and cooperatively reinforced by all the countries involved;
21. AWARE that the management of migration flows cannot be achieved solely by means of monitoring measures but also requires concerted action to tackle the root causes of irregular migration, particularly by implementing development projects in the countries of origin;
22. WHEREAS effective cooperation aimed at providing employment prospects, education and vocational training opportunities for young people, combating migrant smugglers and human traffickers, and the concerted organisation of legal migration and mobility are

fundamental elements for the effective and mutually beneficial prevention and management of migration;

23. RECALLING the EU's commitment to promoting international cooperation and the fair sharing of responsibility and to supporting refugees and their host communities, in order to reduce pressure on host countries and promote the resilience of refugees and host communities;

24. RECALLING the importance of the significant involvement of civil society actors active in the field of migration and the protection of the most vulnerable groups, in particular victims of trafficking in human beings;

25. ACTING in accordance with the Mauritanian and EU legislative frameworks, as well as international instruments ratified by stakeholders;

INTEND to establish a partnership that will strengthen the regular dialogue on the issues and challenges of migration and forced displacement, based on reciprocity, which will provide a framework for agreeing on joint objectives and actions as well as joint recommendations for better organising legal migration and mobility, promoting well-managed mobility, preventing and managing irregular migration – including through the creation of opportunities for young people, better border management, combating migrant smugglers and human traffickers, hosting refugees and promoting international protection, including for asylum seekers, facilitating the return of those who do not have the right to remain, while respecting human rights and international standards for persons in need of international protection, as applicable to Mauritania and the EU.

ENVISAGE, to this end, holding this dialogue on a regular basis, at high level and at senior official level once a year – alternately in Mauritania and in the EU – and at technical/operational level as appropriate.

The aim of this dialogue will be to exchange information and views on legislation, policies and best practices, to continuously explore possibilities for practical cooperation, to formulate policy and operational recommendations and to progressively develop actions in any of the following priority areas:

Roadmap:

Horizontal initiatives

Strengthen Mauritania's capacity to manage migration flows in line with the priorities set out in its National Migration Management Strategy.

Pay greater heed to migration issues and to the root causes of irregular migration in the development and implementation of the participants' policies, particularly with regard to development, employment and training, commercial and economic policy and gender issues, and ensure that they are fully consistent with one another.

Maximise synergies and coordination between existing initiatives and projects among all participants.

Priority areas and objectives:

1. Socio-economic opportunities for young people to facilitate social cohesion

- 1.1. Address the root causes of irregular migration, primarily by promoting the creation of employment opportunities for young Mauritians, in particular through education, vocational training and investment.
- 1.2. Improve the labour-market-relevant skills and competences of young Mauritians, in particular young women.
- 1.3. Increase access to finance and micro-loans, training and business incubation.

2. Protection and asylum

- 2.1. Strengthen capacities for identifying, registering and documenting asylum seekers in Mauritania, while ensuring compliance with the international protection framework.

- 2.2. Strengthen capacities for receiving and processing asylum seekers and refugees, with respect for human rights and paying particular attention to the most vulnerable.
- 2.3. Strengthen access to socio-economic services for refugees, asylum seekers and host communities, and support Mauritania's efforts to implement the commitments made at the Global Refugee Forum in 2023.

3. Legal migration and mobility

- 3.1. Encourage mobility of students, researchers and entrepreneurs.
- 3.2. Work to improve the procedures for issuing visas within the respective legislative frameworks, including the possibility of waiving short-stay visas or visa fees, and of reducing the waiting times for the delivery of visas for certain categories of people.
- 3.3. Explore possibilities to enhance circular mobility, by improving the information available on legal migration opportunities, taking into account the respective labour market situation.
- 3.4. Support Mauritanian diaspora networks in Europe and the integration of regular Mauritanian migrants in the country of residence, including in terms of remittances, in the interests of Mauritania's sustainable development.

4. Irregular migration, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in human beings, return and readmission

- 4.1. Step up efforts to prevent irregular migration, including by way of information and awareness-raising campaigns and border management measures, as a key element in the fight against migrant smuggling, and the protection of the most vulnerable.
- 4.2. Combat and prosecute migrant smuggling networks and human trafficking networks, including through concerted investigations, capacity-building of security services and judicial authorities, and operational cooperation between them.
- 4.3. With regard to any procedure initiated to return Mauritians illegally staying in Europe to their country of origin, the European Union and Mauritania recall their commitments in the

Samoa Agreement, which binds them, and will therefore strengthen their cooperation on return and readmission and ensure that the rights and dignity of individuals are fully protected and respected.

5. Border management, surveillance and control

5.1 Build the capabilities and capacities of the authorities responsible for border management, surveillance and control, including through enhanced cooperation between Mauritania and Frontex in accordance with the needs identified by Mauritania in this area, in particular in terms of equipment and training, and with due regard for its sovereignty.

5.2 Strengthen search and rescue operations.

Implementation

The long-term cooperation framework for this partnership is based on exchanges and dialogue, and will evolve over time on the basis of existing relations between Mauritania and the EU.

The parties take the view that the elements contained in the various components of this partnership will be implemented using a balanced and comprehensive approach and constitute a package.

It should be noted that actions can be undertaken with Mauritania at EU level, between Mauritania and EU Member States bilaterally or Mauritania and groups of Member States under the Team Europe initiative, as well as between Mauritania and EU agencies – such as Frontex, Europol and the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA).

Mauritania and the EU intend to meet regularly, in line with the schedule of existing dialogue and cooperation structures, in order to determine issues of common interest, monitor implementation of the cooperation framework and, where appropriate, review priorities, in keeping with their respective migration strategies.

With a view to implementing this cooperation framework, Mauritania and the EU reaffirm their

intention to cooperate at an operational level, including by involving relevant partners and actors present in Mauritania through the existing cooperation platforms and frameworks.

Mauritania and the EU intend, inter alia, to ensure proper coordination of their respective efforts and to draw up and regularly update an action plan. The action plan is intended only to give guidance on operational cooperation. It is also a dynamic document. The activities are listed for information purposes only and their implementation will be the subject of regular dialogue and discussions and will be updated in the light of progress made and needs identified.

With a view to implementing the initiatives set out in the action plan, Mauritania and the EU will work to mobilise financial and technical resources, in the EU's case while respecting the division of competences between it and its Member States.

The provisions of this joint declaration and the action plan are not designed to create legal rights or obligations under international or national law.

Done at Nouakchott, 7 March 2024, in duplicate.

For the European Union,

For the Islamic Republic of Mauritania,

Ylva Johansson
European Commissioner
for Home Affairs

Mohamed Ahmed Ould Mohamed Lemine
Minister for the Interior and Decentralisation