



**NOTE TO EDITORS ON THE AFRICAN UNION EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE
PLIGHT OF THE AFRICAN MIGRANTS IN LIBYA**

Addis Ababa, 6 December 2017: As part of the efforts to address the plight of the African migrants in Libya, the Joint African Union-European Union-United Nations Task Force convened its first meeting at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, on 4 December 2017. The meeting was chaired by the African Union Commissioner for Social Affairs, Amira el-Fadil.

In addition to representatives of the European Union and the United Nations, the meeting was also attended by representatives of the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and relevant Departments within the African Union Commission. It is to be recalled that the Task Force was established during the Tripartite meeting between African Union Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat, European Commission President Jean Claude Juncker, and European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and European Commission Vice President Federica Mogherini, and United Nations Secretary General António Guterres, held in Abidjan on 29 November 2017, on the margins of the 5th African Union-European Union Summit.

The Task Force, which will be chaired by Commissioner Amira el-Fadil, agreed to operate at three levels: political, working-level and operational (to be coordinated by the African Union Liaison Office for Libya based in Tunis). The immediate focus of the Task Force will be on the repatriation, within the next 6 weeks, of the 20,000 migrants currently in identified Government-controlled detention centers who have expressed the wish to leave Libya, while work will also continue to address other related issues.

Other immediate priorities also include working with: (i) the concerned African Union member states to provide consular services to their nationals stranded in Libya, in order to identify them and provide them with travel documents; (ii) the Libyan authorities to grant landing permits for airlines other than those from Libya, in order to expedite the returns; and (iii) neighboring countries to provide overflight permission.

The Task Force expressed appreciation to countries that have already pledged to support the returns from Libya, and urged other member states to do the same. The European Union pledged to provide financial support to those countries to facilitate return and reintegration efforts.

On 5 December 2017, the Chairperson of the Commission met with the Permanent Representatives of 21 member states that either have nationals stranded in Libya or share a border with Libya. The Chairperson and the Commissioner for Social Affairs used the opportunity to brief the member states on the ongoing African Union-led efforts with partners. The Chairperson highlighted the collective duty of the continent to act quickly and swiftly to ease the suffering of stranded African migrants. In this respect, he called on concerned Member States to send consular officials and to speedily provide consular services, including identification of their nationals and issuance of emergency travel documents. He further urged the Libyan authorities to ensure the safety and security of the migrants held in Government-controlled detention centres, facilitate access to all detention centers for consular officials from the migrants' countries of origin and officials from the African Union and the International Organization for Migration, and to issue flight and landing permits for all air carriers transporting migrants.

The Chairperson reaffirmed the commitment of the African Union to work closely with its member states, the United Nations, the European Union and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the necessary steps are put in place in order to expedite the voluntary repatriation and resettlement process of the African migrants. He expressed appreciation to the member states that pledged logistical support and/or offered to host migrants to be resettled, within the framework of African solidarity and shared responsibility. He urged the other African Union member states to contribute to these efforts.