

THE EUROPEAN UNION EMERGENCY TRUST FUND FOR AFRICA

ELEVENTH BOARD MEETING

17TH DECEMBER 2024

MINUTES

The European Commission convened the eleventh meeting of the Board of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa). The meeting was attended by Commission services (DG INTPA, DG NEAR, DG HOME and DG ECHO); the European External Action Service (EEAS); donor countries, including EU Member States (MS), Switzerland and the United Kingdom; partner countries in the three regions; and representatives of the European Parliament. The Acting Director for Africa of DG INTPA, Mr. Hans Stausboll, chaired the meeting.

Welcome and Introduction

In his introductory remarks, the Chair, welcomed the participants for joining the Board Meeting, noted the good representation and explained that the purpose of this meeting is to take stock of the progress and latest results achieved by the EUTF in the different regions since the last meeting held on 5th December 2023.

The chair highlighted that:

- (i) No new operational projects or programmes have been signed in 2024 in line with the end of the EUTF for Africa contracting period for operational activities set for 31 December 2021. Programmes funded under the EUTF for Africa will however continue after this date as scheduled until their completion date.
- (ii) Between January 2022 and the end of 2025, financial commitments can be undertaken only for administrative activities such as audits, evaluations, monitoring and communication activities.
- (iii) In the course of 2024, the EUTF for Africa has continued to provide support to foster stability and address migration and forced displacement challenges and their root causes, in close cooperation with African partners, as showcased by the presentations which outline detailed results and some examples of key programmes taken forward.
- (iv) During this meeting, the highlights of the Special Report on the EUTF for Africa published in September 2024 by the European Court of Auditors will be shared.

The Head of the Migration Unit of **DG NEAR** and co-chair of the Board Meeting, Ms Katerina Wolfova highlighted that:

- (i) In recent years, the North of Africa region, has been faced with a great number of challenges. The political, socio-economic and environmental situation in the African continent and beyond is becoming increasingly volatile with unpredictable consequences for migration patterns and related needs. It has been important that the EUTF has maintained a flexible approach, which has allowed to address the impact of the Sudan crisis on Egypt and Libya, as well as changing needs in Tunisia.
- (ii) In 2024, the number of irregular arrivals into Europe has decreased substantially, with a 40% decrease compared to the same period of 2023. With regards to the two main routes to Europe across Africa, irregular border crossings on the Central Mediterranean route, mostly to Italy and Malta, have decreased by 60%. Pressure on the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic routes and

- irregular arrivals to mainland Spain and the Canary Islands have however moderately increased by 20% compared to the same period last year.
- (iii) Developments on irregular migration require close monitoring, prompt action and close collaboration with EU MS. In line with the Pact on Migration and Asylum and guidelines of the European Council, as well as the priorities of the new Commission, DG NEAR is committed to step up their efforts on building partners' capacity on border management, fight against smuggling networks and stepping up assisted voluntary returns, while continuing to address protection needs in the field.
 - (iv) The EUTF has enabled DG NEAR to make considerable achievements in these areas, which provide the building blocks of Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE) programming.
 - (v) The support under the EUTF is ongoing and delivering results. Currently, a total of 31 contracts are being implemented amounting to some EUR 301 million or 33% of the total EUTF portfolio in North Africa, with 11 contracts running until the end of 2025.

The Head of Unit for Migration and Human Security (Directorate Global Issues) of the **EEAS**, Ms Mercedes Garcia Perez highlighted that migration management continues to be a focus of European policy. Thereby, the EUTF has been an important instrument in managing migration and, at the same time, complementing European political dialogues, defence and security cooperation efforts. As a result, the 258 EUTF programmes have had a positive multiplier effect on the ground contributing significantly to taking European policies forwards both in West and East Africa. For example, the emergency transit mechanism has been instrumental in handling critical situations such as the situation in Libya and other crises. She reiterated the positive effect of the EUTF being a flexible but also a comprehensive tool in addressing at the same time the root causes of migration, providing durable solutions for refugees, protecting vulnerable migrants and fighting against international criminality. She emphasised that the EUTF provides many valuable lessons (also presented in early December during a legacy seminar in the Horn of Africa) which inform current and future programming, and which should be widely communicated and maintained in future engagements. She outlined that the EUTF success has been carried forward by some delegations under the NDICI-GE programming. Reflecting on the recommendations of European Court of Auditors report particularly with regards to monitoring, evaluation and addressing Human Rights violations, she highlighted that these remain serious challenges across the institutions that EEAS will endeavour to address.

The Head of Unit for West and Central Africa of **DG ECHO**, Mr Giuseppe Angelini, also welcomed the flexibility that the EUTF has brought to addressing the root causes of forced displacement in Africa. He appreciated the opportunity to work with EU MS and the continued collaboration in the design and programming of actions under the EUTF. This collaboration has ensured complementarity, strength, synergies and cooperation in the field of forced displacement thereby contributing to the implementation of the EU commitments on the triple nexus of humanitarian, development and peace. He highlighted that, because of this constructive approach, the humanitarian aid budget has contributed EUR 50 million to the EUTF from 2016-2020. He reiterated the great and multi-dimensional developmental challenges facing Africa such as conflicts, poverty, demographic growth, climate change, poor governance, limited or no access to basic social services and lack of employment opportunities that drive forced displacement, irregular migration and increase vulnerability. He reiterated that when tackling such complex and interdependent developmental challenges, the EUTF provides a model which delivers the nexus modality within the framework of NDICI-GE and in cooperation with EU MS. He outlined that the mission letters of commissioners Šuica and Lahbib provided the right context to explore new policy avenues to implement the triple nexus.

The Head of Sector for North Africa and Coordination of Programming Team of **DG HOME**, Ms Anne-Christine Roisin, highlighted that the EUTF has been instrumental in supporting migration dialogues and establishing common priorities and actions between the EU and Africa. Thanks to its coordinated and flexible nature the EUTF has delivered major outcomes in migration management and addressing forced displacement. She explained that DG HOME has been committed from the outset to supporting this joint endeavour that enhances the impact of actions by pulling financial resources and delivers complementarity of initiatives on migrant protection, counter smuggling and illegal migration. Hence, lessons learned from the EUTF are now continuously implemented through other financial instruments such as the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund. She emphasised that the pressure on the Atlantic and Mediterranean routes remains high; and Africa and the EU still face numerous migration and protection challenges that need to be tackled jointly. To meet those challenges DG HOME last year launched the Global Alliance to counter migrants smuggling, which already provided some results and launched anti-smuggling operational partnerships in several partner countries. She outlined that DG HOME continues to focus on all aspects of migration management including supporting and upscaling the mobility of African citizens to Europe and offering alternatives to irregular migration.

She concluded that the EU, its MS and partner countries' investment and a comprehensive approach to migration over the past years, have yielded strong results, and saved countless lives. Over the next years, DG HOME aims to go one step further towards stronger, closer, and more sustainable migration partnerships built on trust and mutual interest.

State of Play of the EUTF Africa

The Acting Director for Africa of **DG INTPA**, Mr Hans Stausboll, made a presentation on the state of play of the EUTF for Africa as of end of November 2024. The presentation provided information on overall resources, the level of participation of the different categories of implementers in programmes implementation, and the work going forward in view of the winding up of the EUTF in 2026.

On the resources, the Chair highlighted that there will be some unspent funds of the EUTF. The exact amount of remaining funds will only be known closer to the final date for implementation of EUTF activities which is on 31 December 2025. The Commission will submit a proposal on how to use the unspent funds to the Board. As indicated in the EUTF Constitutive Agreement, there are different approaches for the use of residual funds depending on the source of funding. These will be taken into account in the proposal to be submitted to the Board.

The Chair reassured participants that work on addressing the root causes of migration and forced displacement issues does not stop at the end of the EUTF, it is continuing within the national and regional Multi-Annual Indicative Programmes and with EU MS participation through Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) through the NDICI-GE instrument. He reminded that in December 2022 two TEI were launched, focusing on the Atlantic/Western Mediterranean and the Central Mediterranean migratory routes to ensure joint efforts by EU MS and the EU in addressing the migration challenges. The Board and Coordination Committee of the TEIs, organised in Lisbon on 18 October 2024, confirmed the importance of strong country / TEI coordination to progress in the implementation of the two TEIs while operating in a regional framework to deliver a whole-of-route approach.

The Chair informed that the final report of the European Court of Auditors performance audit of the EUTF for Africa in 2023 / 2024 was published on 25 September 2024. The Council conclusions on the EUTF for Africa, have been adopted at working party level on 29 November 2024, adopted by the COREPER II on 4 December 2024 and FAC on 16 December 2024.

The Chair also informed that the final evaluation of the EUTF Africa has been launched and will start in January 2025.

Latest results achieved by the EUTF for Africa in the three regions

The Trust Fund Managers for the Horn of Africa, Mr Enrique De Loma Ossorio Friend, for the Sahel and Lake Chad, Ms Nathalie Vernhes, updated the board on the latest results achieved by the EUTF in their respective regions for **DG INTPA**. The presentation covered the strategic objectives on economic and employment opportunities, resilience, migration management, governance and conflict prevention, showing the progress of the year. The presentation included the summary of specific outcomes per window on completed programmes and one ‘storyline’ per region to showcase main achievements and successful approaches that are being replicated in NDICI-GE programmes. In addition, the presentation highlighted the transition to NDICI-GE Sub Saharan Africa Migration funding committed (2021-2024) and examples of relevant programmes that are now funded through the NDICI-GE Sub Saharan Africa.

In 2024, the Horn of Africa region remains very fragile, in the context of a continued dramatic impact of climate change, economic, social and political challenges, and ongoing conflicts and security challenges, for example in Sudan, in parts of Ethiopia and in Somalia. In addition, the consequences of the Red Sea crisis are negatively affecting the region and leading to increased inflation and insecurity.

The war in Sudan continues to have devastating consequences, including the world's largest internal displacement crisis with over 14 million people displaced inside and outside Sudan impacting on all the neighbouring countries. As a result, as of 2024, Sudan still benefits from the largest amount of the EUTF funding, with a total EUR 442 million, followed by Somalia, with EUR 319 million. A total of 231 operational contracts were signed for the Horn of Africa region, out of which 38 contracts are currently still being implemented, most of which are in Sudan and Somalia. All regional contracts have been finalised.

The Sahel and Lake Chad region continues to present a complex and evolving picture and faces significant challenges in particular political instability marked by coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Guinea. Security threats, including the risk of terrorists spill over from the Sahel to coastal countries, pose significant risk to regional stability with potential consequences for migration, terrorism and organized crime. These are exacerbated by high poverty, unemployment, limited public services and rapid population growth, and environmental concerns.

A total of 213 operational contracts were signed for a total of over EUR 2.2 Billion. Despite the fact that many projects have now ended, and in 2024 only 27 projects reported results, the outputs continue to be very relevant responding to economic stresses, violent conflicts and populations displacements through, for example job creation and skills development, food security, strengthening capacity of protection and migration management, and promoting peace building, governance and conflict prevention. Examples were given of the successful transition of EUTF projects and approaches on migration management and forced displacement to NDICI-GE with actions included in AAP 2023, AAP 2024 and foreseen for AAP 2025.

The Head of the Migration Unit of **DG NEAR**, Mr Martin Klaucke, made a presentation of the results achieved by the EUTF for Africa in the North of Africa region in the four main priority areas: protection and community stabilization; integrated border management - including combatting migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings; labour migration and mobility; migration governance - including voluntary return and reintegration. In 2024, the North Africa region was faced with a volatile situation, especially regarding Libya which is why the country is the largest beneficiary from the EUTF with EUR

391.1 million and 33 out of the total 90 operational contracts. Mr Klaucke highlighted the transition to NDICI-GE has already begun with relevant actions included in AAP 2023 and AAP 2024.

For Information

A summary of the European Court of Auditors' Special Report on the EUTF for Africa and Commission replies was presented by Ms Fiona Deuss Frandi. The Report was published on 25 September 2024 and the Council Conclusions were adopted on 16 December 2024. All the recommendations of the Report have been accepted and will be applied in the NDICI-GE programming. The Council Conclusions will be circulated to the EU MS.

A summary of the administrative expenses was presented by John Ramarojaona.

For agreement

The Proposal by the Chair to replace the Annual Report 2025 by a Final Report (published indicatively in October 2026) was agreed by the Board members.

AOB

N/A

Concluding remarks

In her concluding remarks the Co-Chair:

- Emphasised that it is now time to reflect on the lessons learned from the EUTF for Africa, both on the basis of concluded programmes and forthcoming evaluations, and to continuously draw on the lessons for the NDICI-GE programming in coming years.

In his concluding remarks the Chair:

- Thanked warmly the presenters, Commission/EEAS colleagues and all Board Members and Observers for participating in the Board Meeting;
- Reiterated that, as demonstrated by the Court of Auditors' special report, the EUTF over the last nine years has clearly demonstrated its added value as an innovative flexible instrument that allowed to respond effectively to migration crises in volatile environments and changing circumstances. Moreover, it has contributed to keep migration high on the political agenda, to manage migration in a comprehensive and integrated way whilst strengthening the partnership between EU stakeholders on the ground and with partner countries;
- Stated that the EUTF is the forerunner of Team Europe. Because of the EUTF's ability to pull resources, experience and expertise from different sources in the design and implementation of over 400 programmes in 27 partner countries, the sum of its components is bigger than its individual components;
- Noted the successful transition of the EUTF's flexible approach to NDICI-GE programming.

The Chair confirmed that, as usual, the presentation will be shared with participants and the minutes of the Board Meeting will be circulated to Board Members for approval.

