

Brussels

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## **Secretary-General's remarks at the joint press conference with the President of the European Commission [scroll down for Q&A]**

Thank you very much, Mr. President,

It's a great honour and pleasure to visit the European Union with the new leadership installed.

We have a very good and extensive exchange of views on matters of our common concern.

Last night, I also attended a dinner consultation with all 28 foreign or development ministers of the European Union to discuss matters of our concern, including migration and sustainable development.

In a short while, I will have the honour of addressing the European Parliament.

During this year that marks the 70th anniversary of the United Nations' founding, we have three major opportunities to set the world on a more sustainable, equitable and prosperous path.

We must renew the global partnership for development at the International Conference on Financing for Development which will be held in Addis Ababa in July.

I commend that those countries that have met the target of committing 0.7 per cent of GNI, gross national product, to official development assistance, including 0.2 per cent for the world's least developed countries. I urge other OECD countries to follow that example. I welcome yesterday's decision by EU Member States to re-commit to that target. I urge them to spare no efforts to reach it as soon as possible.

A successful outcome in Addis Ababa is crucial for building trust and momentum towards an ambitious post-2015 development agenda in New York in September and a comprehensive and universal agreement on climate change in December in Paris.

The emergence of violent extremism is a grave threat to international peace and security. All countries and organizations should join hands to forge a multi-faceted response that respects international human rights and humanitarian law. I will present a comprehensive plan of action on how counter violent extremism and terrorism to the General Assembly later this year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The complex challenges of migration and refugee protection are also foremost in our minds. In the Mediterranean, many women, men and children are losing their lives while fleeing war or simply seeking a better future.

Our response must be comprehensive, focusing on countries of destination, transit and origin. We need to crack down on smugglers while saving lives and upholding human rights and international law.

The United Nations, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration are ready to work with European leaders to address both the emergencies and root causes, and to explore how the Member States of the European Union can provide legal alternatives to such dangerous voyages, including resettlement, work and study visas, and enhanced family reunifications.

In that regard, I welcome the announcement by the European Commission a short while ago of a proposal for the relocation of 40,000 of asylum-seekers as a step in the right direction. I highly commend the very compassionate leadership of President [Jean-Claude] Juncker of the European Commission. I encourage EU Member States to show compassion as they consider this important proposal to share their resettlement responsibilities. This can enable the European Union to address the dramatically increasing flows of people while setting an example for other regions of the world facing similar challenges.

Again, I thank President Juncker for your leadership and strong support. You can count on me.

Thank you.

Q: On the EU operation in the Mediterranean, you have expressed skepticism about any military response to migration problem, do you believe that there should be an EU naval operation with a military component, and do you believe there is enough support in the Security Council to get support for the operation soon?

SG: The point that I expressed my concern [on] was the idea to destroy all these boats. Of course, you know, I support this strengthening of the military capacity in searching and rescuing the people. Our priority should be given to life saving, and also life-saving humanitarian assistance to those people. But when you consider destroying these boats, it may end up eventually in depriving of even the very limited means of those people, even though these boats are used sometimes in smuggling people in criminal acts – there may be some other ways. That is the point which I expressed my concern [about]. Otherwise, I have been urging here in the European Union and [also on] Southeast Asia that their priority should be given to life saving and strengthening search and rescue. At the same time, one should look at the root causes – why these people are risking their lives. We need to have international solidarity in addressing this issue and we need to enlarge any legal and normal avenues so that people can seek some normal way to migrate to seek better opportunities.

Q: [inaudible]

SG: There are certain international laws and regulations in operating this. That is up to the Security Council members to consider, but I believe that a military operation has some limited effectiveness. We need to address all this in a comprehensive way.

Q: Would you support the European Union military operation inside the Libyan territorial waters, even maybe in Libya, because the political dialogue, guided by your envoy Mr. Bernardino Leon, still have a lot of problems and may fail. So would you support the European Union military action inside Libyan waters? And would you please tell us about Yemen? The legitimate government of Yemen still is asking that the Houthi militia or the Houthi groups have to implement the United Nations Security Council resolution before they join the dialogue. Do you hope that anytime they may comply to that and how do you see let's say the situation of the near future? Thank you.

SG: For your first part of the question, there is relevant international law covering all these operations inside territorial waters of sovereign states. Therefore, if there needs to be any such necessity of staging military operations inside territorial waters, that should be discussed between the authorities or military authorities and the countries concerned, in this case, Libya. As I said last month, with Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy and High Representative Federica Mogherini, we flew to the Mediterranean Sea and I observed for myself the military operations. As I said earlier, what I'm concerned [about] is that destroying these vessels, it has some other implications.

On your second part of your questions about Yemen, I instructed yesterday my Special Envoy Ismail Ould Sheikh Ahmed to postpone this political dialogue which was scheduled [for] tomorrow afternoon. I have received an official request of President [Mansour] Hadi and other Yemeni authorities and other actors in the region, therefore in respecting their wishes, I decided to postpone it, but I am in the process of fixing another date as soon as possible. I may be speaking to President Hadi soon. At this time, I would urge again to the parties concerned to immediately stop their military activities and allow the United Nations and international community to provide life-saving and humanitarian assistance to many people. There are no other alternatives to peaceful resolution of this issue through dialogue. This is my firm, firm policy, and I am in the process of consulting with the parties concerned. Thank you.

Q: You spoke about the importance of the EU proposal for relocation of 40,000 potential asylum-seekers, saying it was a positive step forward. Some countries are excluded, they haven't opted in into the scheme, like the UK, they can volunteer to participate in that. Do you think that Britain is living up to its moral obligation with regard to refugees from Syria and Eritrea? And secondly, do you think it is right to the British Government offers an in-out referendum on staying in the EU to its people?

SG: First part of the question – I am here to consult with European Union leaders, and I understand that this relocation of 40,000 [asylum-seekers], it must have been subject of an intense discussion and consultation among European Union leaders. So I respect their decision. I do not have any comment on whether countries are outside of this framework or not, that is the decision of the European Union. For the second question, I am not in a position to make any comment on that. I thank you very much for your attention.