

LADDER Consortium joint statement in the event of the Valletta Summit¹

Launched at the Ladder Conference on Migration and Development- EYD2015: The year for local action for global solutions

11-12 November 2015

On the occasion of the Valletta Summit of 11 and 12 November 2015 of EU and African Leaders, we, the consortium of LADDER (composed of 45 Local Authorities, Civil Society organisations and networks, originating from 35 EU and non-EU countries), joining together at the concurrent conference “*Migration and Development- EYD 2015, the year for local action for global solutions*”, wish to use this opportunity to underline points already highlighted to EU Ministers of Justice and of Home Affairs in the LADDER statement on the occasion of the meeting of the Interior and Justice Ministers in September 2015 entitled “*Humane, comprehensive and immediate action for Migration*” and on those statements released additionally by Civil Society on the occasion of this Valletta Summit.² These statements recognize and implore ministers and leaders to address the multifaceted challenges brought about by increased global migration. The LADDER consortium also calls on EU and Africa Leaders to take heed of the recently signed Sustainable Development Goals framework (including the SDG 10.7 on fair, safe and responsible migration) that EU Member States have unanimously committed to, and on the Treaty obligation for policy coherence for development (Article 208 TFEU).

The flow of people fleeing conflict zones and unstable countries, in particular most recently Syria, is constantly increasing and unless immediate action is taken at both European and international level, lives will continue to be lost. Hosting countries, transit countries and final destination countries of persons seeking international protection must all work together to find and agree upon common actions and plans. Together in the outcomes of their discussions, EU and African states must ensure the following:

i) Humane treatment of Asylum Seekers and Beneficiaries of Protection

Fundamentally, any agreements made must ensure that humane treatment and the unconditional respect of fundamental human rights, equality and basic life-conditions of migrants are paramount at all times, including:

- Elementary nutrition, healthcare, safety and hygiene standards, as well as information and legal assistance should be guaranteed in all locations where asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection are, making the necessary funding available for this.

¹ ***The content of this letter does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Responsibility for the information and views expressed in the letter lies entirely with the authors***

² Statements include from CONCORD, from Caritas Europa & Caritas Africa and from ICMC-NRC

- A coordinated response is needed at EU level, with strong cooperation between EU Member States and non EU countries (including states in Africa) on the migration routes, and involvement of all other actors including local authorities and civil society.
- Attention must be given to the specific needs of unaccompanied children and women.
- All countries must address the basic requirement of adequate infrastructure for reception and hosting of asylum seekers, beneficiaries of protection and people on the move that uphold basic human rights and basic living standards.

ii) **Combat illegal migrant smuggling through promoting safer channels of migration**

Human smuggling is unfortunately still thriving. Focus should be on developing and implementing an effective joint EU-Africa action plan to combat illegal human smuggling. This does not mean solely destroying Smugglers boats and criminalising genuine asylum seekers, but involves more proactive approach to resolving the crisis such as through encouraging more legal channels to ensure migration flows takes place under safe conditions to reduce both the risks and costs of migration, instead of stricter border controls that create more lucrative markets for people smugglers.

iii) **Civil Society and Local Authority involvement in policy making and implementation**

We have seen unprecedented offers for help in the current crisis from civil society movements and individuals. The EU & Member States must recognise the value of partnerships with civil society and local authorities to develop appropriate responses and mechanism to support such initiatives.

Additionally, we are disappointed by the lack of involvement of Civil Society in the Valletta Summit and feel this was an opportunity missed for a true collaboration to find effective solutions

iv) **Effective diplomacy to tackle long terms issues**

In their discussions, EU and Africa countries must not turn a blind eye to the underlying causes of migration. The deep and long-term causes of migration must be addressed with courage and determination. As such, discussions on tackling development issues in Africa must include a focus on investing in the resolution of conflicts and development in conflict and unstable regions. Solutions to the crisis will only come if the international community, the EU included, invest and increase efforts in peace building, conflict resolution, tackling terror and terrorism, promotion of stable, accountable and just governments and sustainable and inclusive development in origin and transit countries.

Actions must be developed together with international actors, civil society organisations and citizens from Europe and from the concerned countries, ensuring cooperation, diplomacy and ownership.

v) **Effective and Genuine Aid**

The above will only be possible if EU Member States uphold and increase their support to overseas development assistance and they ensure that their spending, in combination with political & economic tools, are targeted genuinely and strategically and tied to action on human rights, conflict and peace

resolution and governance in the conflict areas. The EU should forge a new humanitarian and development policy for preventing crisis and conflicts, as well as trade and common security policies that are coherent with development objectives. ODA should therefore not be used for reception of asylum seekers in Europe, for fighting people smugglers, or financing border control reinforcement by African countries.

vi) Integration of migrants in local communities

Those who are fleeing persecution and conflict are looking for a safe and secure home. Therefore, it is important not to get lost in the international political wrangling over borders, but ensure that once migrants arrive in a host country they are treated with dignity. As such all host countries must:

- Ensure migrants are not be penalized for their irregular entry or stay. No form of discrimination or violence is acceptable or justifiable, whether taken by public authorities or private actors. The rights of unaccompanied minors and women should be specifically addressed in this regard
- Ensure the development of strategies to uphold the common basic principles of integration, translating them at the local level to ensure that migrants are able to fully access their human rights and play a role as citizens. This will in turn contribute to ensuring these migrants play a force for development in their origin country
- Support and implement programmes and initiatives to raise awareness about the migration issue, to encourage tolerance and solidarity toward asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection and to fight racism, xenophobia and all kinds of discrimination against migrants across Europe. This includes working with local authorities, civil society, media and formal and non-/informal education actors.

vii) Understanding Migration as a Driver for Development

States should ensure the facilitation of the role of migrants as development agents by taking action on migration-related elements of the Sustainable Development Agenda including reducing the transaction costs of remittances and enhancing diaspora engagement, as social investors and entrepreneurs and as agents of change and actors for social justice. This would reflect the acknowledgement of migrants and diasporas' contribution to sustainable development in both their countries of origin and destination, as agreed in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Finally, we fully support efforts being made by EU and African states to jointly tackle the migration issue, yet we wish to emphasise the need to recognise humanitarian dimension of this issue, while looking forward to seeing the appropriate decisions being taken to ensure fundamental human rights are upheld. As such, we hope that the results of the Valletta Summit will reflect some of the concerns tabled and discussed within this conference and we will be forwarding the results arising from this conference to the Ministers of our partner countries.

ALDA – European Association for Local Democracy

SOS MALTA - Migration Path coordinator LADDER

On behalf of **LADDER** - Local Authorities as Drivers for Development Education and Awareness Raising