



### 5<sup>TH</sup> AU-EU SUMMIT 2017: SOLUTION FOR AFRICAN MIGRANT CRISIS

By  
**Aamna Rafiq**  
Research Associate

Edited by  
**Najam Rafique**

December 13, 2017

*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



The 5<sup>th</sup> African Union – European Union Summit was held in Abidjan, the Republic of Ivory Coast on November 29 - 30, 2017. This summit witnessed the participation of the Heads of State and Government from 28 EU and 55 AU member states. The Presidents of the European Council, European Commission, African Union Commission and Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) also participated in the Summit to determine a future course of collaboration between the two continents. The recent Libyan Slavery Scandal overshadowed the official theme “Investing in Youth for Sustainable Future.”<sup>1</sup> The United States’ giant media network *CNN* had exposed a horrifying situation of African slave trade in the Libyan migrant camps just 15 days before the Summit.<sup>2</sup>

The leaders adopted a joint declaration defining the common priorities for the mutual partnership in four strategic areas; economic opportunities for youth; peace and security; mobility and migration; and cooperation on governance. A joint statement was also adopted “condemning the inhuman treatment of migrants and refugees by criminal groups” in Libya. The German Chancellor Angela Merkel stated that “it’s very important that we simply support Africans to put a stop to illegal migration, so people don’t have to either suffer in horrible camps in Libya or even being traded.”

<sup>1</sup> “5th African Union - EU Summit,” Council of European Union, last modified December 6, 2017, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2017/11/29-30/>

<sup>2</sup> “People for Sale: Exposing Migrant Slave Auctions in Libya,” *CNN*, November 14, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/specials/africa/libya-slave-auctions>

The French President Emmanuel Macron declared the trafficking of African migrants as slaves a “crime against humanity” and announced “the concrete military and policing action” against the human traffickers.<sup>3</sup> However, he openly opposed the deployment of any troops in Libya by saying that “it’s not about declaring war, Libya is a state in political transition ... but there’s reinforced police action that needs to be done to dismantle those networks.”<sup>4</sup> France also proposed UN sanctions on the networks involved in this crime. The UN Security Council not only adopted a resolution condemning such a gross violation of human rights, but also launched the formal investigations which will be monitored by the Anti-Illegal Immigration Agency of Libya.<sup>5</sup> During the Summit, EU agreed to establish a *Joint Migration Task Force* in collaboration with the AU and the UN.<sup>6</sup> The force aims to:

- i. Rescue and safeguard the lives of migrants and refugees especially in Libya.
- ii. Provide appropriate assistance to migrants for voluntary repatriation to countries of their origin.
- iii. Accelerate the resettlement of migrants in need of international protection.

African states are currently confronting an acute migration crisis due to increasing population accompanied by slow economic development. In 2050, the inhabitants of Africa will be approximately 1.3 billion and youth will be more than 50% of this total population.<sup>7</sup> To protect this youth bulge from extremism, extortion, exploitation and human trafficking, it is mandatory to enhance the economic growth of region and offer improved employment opportunities. For youth development, leaders at the Summit agreed to expand the exchange programmes between Africa and Europe. They also agreed to **regulate the movement** of students and academics across the African continent. Furthermore, EU also introduced a new **external investment plan titled *The***

---

<sup>3</sup> “Squalid Libya migrant camps in spotlight at EU-Africa summit,” *Daily Mail*, November 29, 2017, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-5128421/Merkel-wants-help-Africa-curb-illegal-migration-flow.html>

<sup>4</sup> “Emmanuel Macron announces EU plan to launch ‘concrete military action’ to rescue African migrants enslaved in Libya,” *Telegraph*, November 30, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/11/29/europe-promises-44bn-marshall-plan-africa-migrant-slavery-libya/>

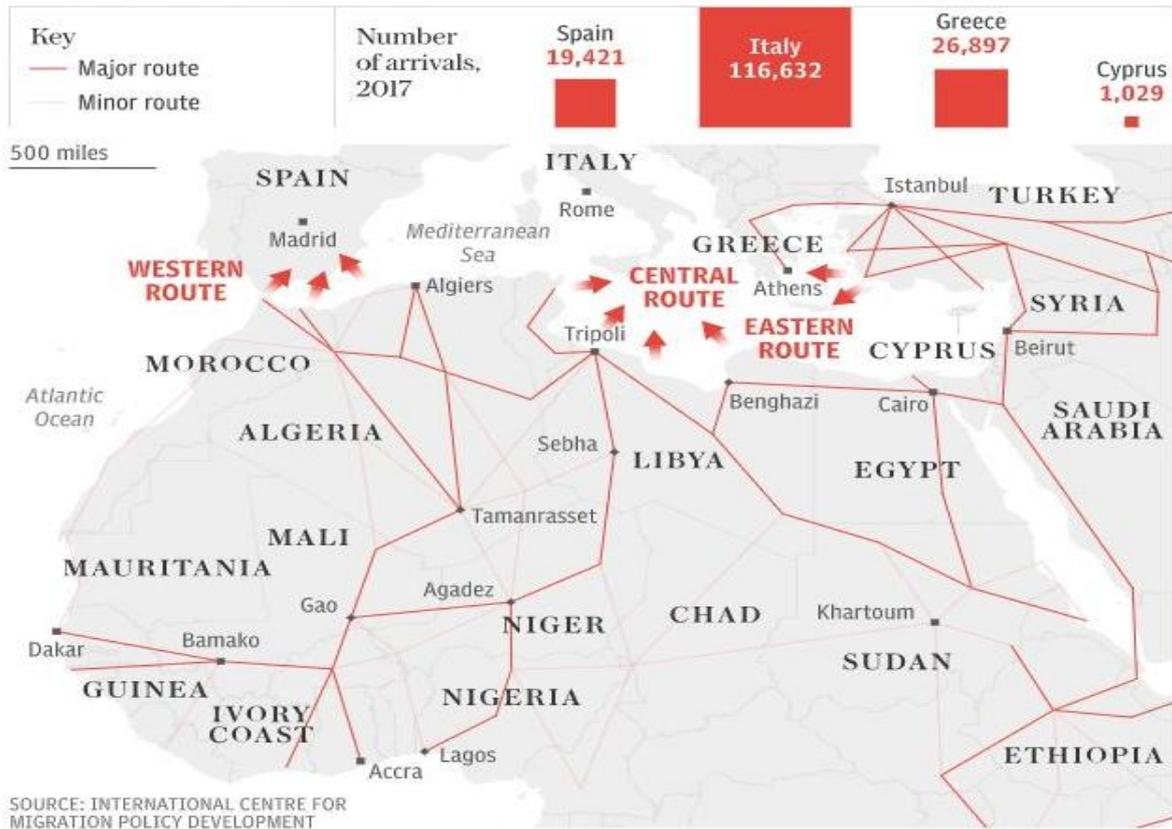
<sup>5</sup> “UN considers sanctions to fight Libya slave trade,” *Aljazeera*, November 29, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/11/considers-sanctions-fight-libya-slave-trade-171128183838460.html>; “UN Security Council seeks investigation into Libya slave trade,” *CNN*, November 21, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/21/africa/un-security-council-libya-slave-trade/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> Council of European Union, “5th African Union - EU Summit.”

<sup>7</sup> “Emmanuel Macron announces ...,” *Telegraph*, November 30, 2017, op.cit.

**Juncker Plan** that aims to start €44 billion investments in Africa by 2020 leading to creation of new job opportunities for the youth.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 1: North African Migration Routes**



**Source (s):** “Emmanuel Macron announces EU plan to launch ‘concrete military action’ to rescue African migrants enslaved in Libya,” *Telegraph*, November 30, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/11/29/europe-promises-44bn-marshall-plan-africa-migrant-slavery-libya/>.

This migration crisis sparked a very dangerous blame game between the African states and the EU, but the fact is that this is not a sudden crisis. It developed over a decade long period and both sides either turned a blind eye to it or resorted to short term solutions. The core objective of all previous European approaches was to stop the migrant influx to Europe, especially Italy by providing heavy funding and training to Libyan coast guards and establishment of detention centres in Libya. These short term solutions produced significantly dangerous implications and the overcrowded and contaminated detention centres become a living hell on this earth for migrants captured by the Libyan authorities. Now it’s time for the EU to adopt a comprehensive and long-term approach to mitigate this crisis. Instead of introducing financial aid projects like “EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTFA)” and the new “European Fund for Sustainable Development,” EU should first identify the root causes and link the patterns and dynamics of migration with the financial aid structure and

<sup>8</sup> Council of European Union, “5th African Union - EU Summit”, op.cit.

policy of border management. EU leaders at “the Valletta Summit 2015” launched an action plan with the core objective of “conducting a joint EU-Africa analysis of the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement” which will facilitate the formulation of evidence-base policies. However, after two years, this analysis has not yet materialized.

In this year Summit, “AU” instead of “Africa” emerged as an equal partner of EU for the first time. This shift from EU-Africa to AU-EU Summit is more than just the change of name and reflects the increasing AU’s internal cohesion and recognition of its identity as an international actor. This also facilitated the AU’s endeavor to revise the negotiation agenda for migration crisis which was previously driven by EU or a single dominant African state like Libya. In order to maintain this new strong position, AU must remain committed to the implementation of the reforms proposed by the President Paul Kagame of Rwanda at the AU Summit in July, 2017.<sup>9</sup> The long-lasting peace, security and economic development for African migrants are significantly linked with addressing the root causes of the crisis. Besides economic assistance, a comprehensive and consensus based political solution is also required that must include all key stakeholders like EU, AU, UN, as well as the private sectors and human rights organizations which requires strong political will and commitment.

---

<sup>9</sup> “The EU-Africa summit is now the AU-EU summit. Why the upgrade matters,” *News 24*, December 5, 2017, <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/the-eu-africa-summit-is-now-the-au-eu-summit-why-the-upgrade-matters-20171205>