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**Taking forward the EU's Comprehensive Approach to external
conflicts and crises - Action Plan 2016-17**

1. Introduction

In December 2013, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR) and the European Commission presented a Joint Communication¹ on the EU Comprehensive Approach to external conflicts and crises. The Comprehensive Approach is about working better together, and enhancing the coherence, effectiveness and impact of EU's policy and action. This will be achieved by setting out EU and Member States objectives and priorities across different policy areas within a given country/region.

Following discussions with EU Member States and consultations with a broad spectrum of stakeholders from the political, military, development and humanitarian domains, the May 2014 Council gave full support to this concept and agreed a set of ambitious Council conclusions² on the EU's Comprehensive Approach, including on the way forward. Stressing the need for these principles and priorities to be taken from theory to strategic planning and implementation, the Council invited the HR and the Commission to prepare an Action Plan. Building on the principles and proposals set out in the Joint Communication and the Council conclusions, the Action Plan 2015³ identified priority actions and specific initiatives under the policy framework of the Comprehensive Approach that the EU institutions and EU Member States together should take forward with a view to illustrate how the Comprehensive Approach is taken forward collectively.

As a follow-up to the Action Plan 2015, the present EU's Comprehensive Approach to External Conflicts and Crises Action Plan 2016-17 has been developed with a view to identifying new prioritised actions and country cases for 2016-17. It has been prepared through an inclusive process, involving relevant EEAS and Commission services as well as Member States. Informal expert meetings were held with Member States in December 2015 and March 2016 to reflect on priorities to be carried forward in an Action Plan for 2016-17.

The prioritised actions included in the Action Plan 2016-17 have been organised according to the following themes (identical with the themes in the Annex of the Action Plan 2015; (i) Joint analysis, options and strategic vision; (ii) Conflict prevention; (iii) Make better use of EU Delegations; (iv) Linking policies and internal and external action; and (v) Work in partnerships. Furthermore, actions identified in the Action Plan 2015 will continue to be followed closely. To facilitate their monitoring, they are listed in the Annex to the 2015 Progress Report. This also includes the regional/country cases from 2015, namely, Sahel Regional Strategy, Central America and the Caribbean, Afghanistan and Somalia.

Finally, the Action Plan 2016-17 has - to the extent possible - integrated horizontal themes in the country cases.

¹ Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on the EU's Comprehensive Approach to external conflicts and crises, JOIN(2013)30 final (11.12.2013).

² Council conclusions on the EU's Comprehensive Approach, Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 12 May 2014.

³ Joint SWD (2015) 85 final (10.4.2015).

2. Actions prioritised for 2016/17

2.1. Actions related to Joint Analysis, Options and Strategic Visions

Links/synergies between the Comprehensive Approach and Joint Programming

The Comprehensive Approach is an important means to implement the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy⁴ and will help to ensure a holistic and integrated approach necessary for the achievement of the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals.

The Comprehensive Approach should in particular be closely linked to the EU's Joint Programming exercises. The linkages are clear, the Comprehensive Approach will benefit from the existence of Joint Programming (JP) and versa visa. The joint/shared analysis across EU, Member States and other partners at country level, required as part of the Comprehensive Approach and JP, is for most parts identical and based mainly on existing tools and analysis. Therefore, there are opportunities for synergies preparing JP and Joint Framework Documents.

There is a need for identifying good practices, on the various options for linking JP and the Comprehensive Approach. The testing ground for the integration of JP and the Comprehensive Approach is at country level.

Focus area:

- Establish lessons learned on Joint Programming and Comprehensive Approach synergies based on experiences in a number of selected countries (to be selected at a later stage). Special attention will be given to joint/shared analysis.

2.2. Actions related to conflict prevention

Security Sector Reform (SSR)

A new EU-wide strategic framework to support SSR⁵ provides the EU with a coherent policy encompassing short-term (mainly CSDP) endeavours, mid-term activities (mainly under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace) and long-term EU engagement in the area of SSR. Furthermore, the strategic framework will ensure more complementarity and coherence of these actions with the on-going and planned programmes in the wider governance spectrum, including the rule of law, justice and public administration reform. To this end, the new policy largely integrates the two previously separate EU SSR support policy concepts: 1) the EU Concept for

⁴ "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy", 28 June 2016, <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/shared-vision-common-action-stronger-europe>

⁵ JOIN(2016) 31 final, 5 July 2016

European Security and Defence Policy support to Security Sector Reform (13 October 2005)⁶, which provided principles and political guidance for future performance of SSR-related interventions conducted by the CSDP missions; and 2) the Commission Communication – A Concept for European Community Support for Security Sector Reform (May, 2006)⁷, which formed a conceptual basis for European Commission interventions in the area of SSR.

Focus area:

- A comprehensive EU "SSR coordination matrix" will be developed in at least 2 countries within two years after the adoption of the SSR Joint Communication. The SSR coordination matrix will define common objectives and identify appropriate articulations and sequencing between political dialogue, cooperation activities/instruments and possible CSDP missions/operations.

2.3. Actions related to make better use of EU Delegations

Pilots on Country Situational Awareness Platforms (CSAP)

The concept of a Country Situational Awareness Platform (CSAP) has recently been developed, within the EEAS. The purpose is to strengthen the ties between Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and Freedom, Security and Justice (FSJ), by enabling information and knowledge exchange among EU actors in areas where civilian CSDP missions are deployed.

The proposed CSAPs could potentially facilitate sharing a common understanding of the situation at country level, and improve the combined situational awareness and analysis capacity by better linking up the dedicated facilities in the EU.

It could also strengthen early, pro-active, transparent and regular information sharing, and coordination among EU headquarters, EU Delegations, CSDP missions and operations and Member States. The CSAP would establish an EU structured situational awareness mechanism at country level, which would facilitate and complement the Early Warning System, while taking full advantage of the coordinating role played by the EU Delegation. It would provide analytical input to the EEAS and Commission services to inform and support risk-based policymaking.

The CSAP should be chaired by the Head of the Delegation. The platform composition and meeting schedule should be flexible and reflect operational requirements.

The approach takes full advantage of the role of the Head of Delegation to bring together the EU and Member States present on the ground across the full spectrum of relevant actions (political dialogue, development co-operation and joint programming, input to security-related strategies, local cooperation with CSDP missions and operations, consular protection, as appropriate, etc.).

⁶ 12566/4/05 Rev.4 of 13 October 2015

⁷ COM (2006) 253 final, 24 May 2006

Focus area:

- Country Situational Awareness Platforms (CSAP) will be established in two pilot countries (to be selected later). The purpose of the two pilots is to assess the functioning of the CSAP which could feed into refining the concept further.

2.4. Actions related to linking policies and internal and external action*Migration*

The European Commission has established two Trust Funds to respond better to the migration and refugee crises: The Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis - MADAD Trust Fund⁸ to address the Syrian crisis and the Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing Root Causes of Irregular Migration and Displaced Persons in Africa⁹, launched at the Valetta Summit on 11-12 November 2015. The two Trust Funds were notably established with a view of maximising efficiency, coherence, visibility, flexibility and speed of delivery of EU support/action across various financial instruments and countries. They reflect the policy and response coordinating mechanisms between all EU actors concerned.

The June and October 2015 European Councils tasked the HR/VP and the Commission to conduct High.

Level Dialogues on Migration (HLD) with relevant third countries of origin and transit, and to prepare by April 2016, comprehensive and tailor-made incentive packages to foster cooperation on migration, including on return and readmission. The High Level Dialogues should embed migration in the overall relation with third countries and could also be used to take forward the implementation of regional processes and commitments (e.g. the Valletta Action Plan). While return and readmission along with reintegration measures remain top priorities of the EU and of interest for the Member States, it is paramount also to be mindful of third countries' interests and fragilities. To this end, the tools available to enlarge legal mobility avenues should serve as incentives for reforms on migration management and for implementing the readmission agreement with partners. In particular, as regards African countries, the EU needs to take into account a comprehensive and balanced approach agreed in the Valletta Summit and promote the strategic use of the Trust Fund ensuring full coherence between cooperation actions devoted to migration issues and the High Level Dialogues.

Today's refugee and migration crises have shown that in order to reverse the trend of increasing numbers of protracted humanitarian crises that are caused by violent conflict and also contribute to fuel displacement and irregular migration, now more than ever, there is a need to have a long-term view that focuses on early action and prevention by addressing the root causes and the

⁸ Commission Decision C(2014)9615 of 10.12.2014 on the establishment of a European Union Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis, "The Madad Fund".

⁹ Commission Decision C(2015) 7293 of 20.10.2015 on the establishment of a European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa.

drivers of fragility and conflict. The Commission Communication¹⁰, as well as subsequent Council Conclusions¹¹ have shown the EU's commitment to engage early and in a comprehensive manner in forced displacement crises, to harness the resilience and foster the self-reliance of the displaced and their host communities and end aid dependency. By engaging with partner countries at the national and local level, the EU will promote economic opportunities and inclusion in service delivery, specifically education, for forcibly displaced populations – increasing the effectiveness of the EU's response and promoting the dignity of affected populations.

As part of the EU Trust Fund for stability and addressing the root cause of migration in Africa, a research and evidence facility has recently been established. The use of research will contribute to ensuring that a conflict /fragility sensitive and comprehensive approach is applied.

Focus areas:

- Ensure coherence between the actions funded under all financing instruments addressing migration issues and the political messages, including the High Level Dialogues. All relevant migration aspects should be included in high level dialogues with relevant third countries, including Member States and other development partners.
- Assess whether joint or coordinated needs assessment and subsequent actions are being undertaken and promote a comprehensive approach to forced displacement from the outset and throughout crises, as in line with the Communication Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance; Forced Displacement and Development.

2.5. Actions related to work in partnership

Women, peace and security

Implementing the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security¹² and its follow-up resolutions has required the concerted efforts of EU and EU Member States alike in many policy areas including crisis management, conflict prevention and resolution, humanitarian action, justice and security reform, gender equality and development cooperation.

The second Implementation Report at EU level, adopted in January 2014¹³, stresses many encouraging developments, showing clear signs that there is a stronger understanding of how

¹⁰ COM (2016)234 final, 26.4.2016

¹¹ Foreign Affairs Council (Development) of 12.5.2016

¹² S/RES/1325 (2000).

¹³ http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/features/features-working-women/working-with-women/article21_en.html

women can be included in peace processes. However challenges remain, including an evaluation of the impact of the tools used to expand and strengthen the women, peace and security agenda, and to increase engagement and cooperation on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325.

Progress has been achieved as all EU Delegations, as well as CSDP missions and operations, have now nominated gender focal points. In addition, specific training modules on human rights and gender in crisis management have been developed, including a focus on sexual violence in armed conflicts. Training and awareness raising is also organised for EU headquarters' staff. Additional initiatives include a gender-age marker which is a tool to assess how strongly EU-funded actions integrate gender and age considerations in humanitarian action.

The Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013-2020¹⁴ underlines the role of women in building resilience in households and communities affected by crises. The Early Warning System includes indicators on the risks related to the role of women, such as poor representation of women in formal governance structures, on the relation between conflict and gender roles, domestic violence and rape and on cultural norms.

The Gender Action Plan 2016-2020¹⁵ has identified "Ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity" and "Strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation" among its pivotal thematic areas for action¹⁶, in which targeted measures will be taken to reach the specific objectives. In line with UNSCR 1325, investing in gender equality and social justice and taking into account the protection and participation of women in conflict resolution would improve the outcome and the impact of conflict prevention strategies and implementation of peace processes. Preventing and combating Violence against Women and Girls is a precondition for equitable and inclusive sustainable development, as well as an important value and objective in itself.¹⁷ Particularly in conflict affected countries, displacement, economic insecurity, and marred social networks lead to more unstable environments, increasing the risk of sexual violence and of worsening status of women and overall gender inequalities.

Finally, further research on the correlation between conflict and violence against women is undertaken, to generate a baseline for future monitoring and analysis of violence against women (VAW). It will include assessing whether VAW can be a valid indicator for Early Warning Systems in certain contexts.

¹⁴ SWD(2013)227final (19.6.2013)

¹⁵ SWD(2015)182 final, "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020", 21.9.2015; endorsed by Council conclusions 13201/15, 26 October 2015

¹⁶ An additional thematic area is "Promoting the economic and social rights/empowerment of girls and women". In addition to the three thematic areas, the Gender Action Plan also includes a horizontal area "Shifting the Commission services and the EEAS' institutional culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments".

¹⁷ Council conclusions on the Overarching Post-2015 Agenda, 11559/13, 25 June 2013

Focus areas:

- Based on the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020¹⁸, it will be assessed to which extent improved measures of actions within the area of women, peace and security, have been achieved, in order to enhance accountability.
- Based on selected case-studies (to be identified later) assess how the EU is integrating gender into crisis management missions and operations (by training modules, workshops etc.)

3. Country Case Studies

The country cases should bring forward different aspects of the Comprehensive Approach and include countries with and without CSDP presence, as well as places where joint efforts like joint programming are already in place. The case studies should set out some specific targets to be met during 2016/17, and focus on drawing lessons learned from the implementation of the 2015 Comprehensive Approach Action Plan.

3.1. Mali

A large number of EU instruments are implemented in Mali: CSPD missions, both civilian and military, humanitarian action, projects financed by the European Development Fund (EDF), the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) and more recently, the EU Trust Fund for Africa. The significant number of tools deployed emphasises the need for close coordination between the actors in order to strengthen the efficiency, effectiveness and the impact of the EU action. The Comprehensive Approach is also necessary to ensure the coherence of the EU action, including Member States, and thus, the credibility and visibility towards partners. A Joint Programming Document was signed by 8 Member States in 2015. It is a comprehensive document, including joint results framework and using national indicators. The total financial weight of Joint Programming for the period 2014-18 is estimated to EUR 1.7 billion.

The situation that has led to choose Mali as a pilot case three years ago is still relevant today: a high number of actors intervening in the country, with diverse mandates and objectives. Concrete results have already been achieved thanks to a reinforced coordination and confirm the importance of the Comprehensive Approach in Mali.

However, more can and should be done, including in terms of information and knowledge sharing to reinforce the impact of EU action and work toward the overarching goal of EU external cooperation in Mali, i.e. ensuring the stability of the country, building the resilience of the most vulnerable, and reducing poverty.

¹⁸ SWD(2015)182 final, 21.9.2015, endorsed by Council conclusions 13201/15, 26 October 2015.

Focus area:

- Assess the synergies between the Joint Programming and the Comprehensive Approach, and identify possible recommendations on how to improve information and knowledge sharing between the EU and Member States with a view to increase the impact of the EU action in Mali.

3.2. Ukraine and Security Sector Reform

Over a period of 2005-2015, the EU has invested over EUR 250 million in supporting Security Sector Reform (SSR) related activities in Ukraine. The activities have focused on border management and the judiciary. In 2014, an EU Super Twinning Justice Reform project implemented by a consortium of agencies and Ministries from EU Member States was launched. With the establishment of the CSDP EU Advisory Mission Ukraine (EUAM) in support of the Civilian Security Sector Reform, the EU has expanded its engagement in the civilian security sector of Ukraine. EUAM aims to strengthen and support the reform of the civilian security sector in Ukraine which should result in democratic, sustainable, efficient and trusted Ukrainian security services, in full respect for Human Rights. EUAM advises, mentors and supports the relevant Ukrainian civilian security sector bodies in the conceptual planning and in the implementation of effective and sustainable reforms of the law-enforcement agencies (Police, Border Guards, Penitentiary and Security Service) and Rule of Law institutions (Judiciary and Public Prosecution), also in the light of cross-cutting good governance aspects (anti-corruption, human rights, public administration reform and strategic communication).

The four ongoing EU initiatives related to SSR include the EUAM, the Support to Justice Sector Reform project, the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) and the State Building Contract. The EUAM mission will advise on the development of the reform strategy, a framework for planning concrete steps and a structure to oversee implementation. The respect for human rights, the fight against corruption and gender issues will feature on the EUAM's mission's agenda across its different fields of action. The purpose of the justice sector reform is to support the development of a coherent sector-wide justice reform strategy, enhancing coordination structures and provide advisory support in legislative reforms.

The SSR project in Ukraine presents therefore a good case for implementing the Comprehensive Approach. A strong emphasis should be given to joint/shared analysis of the security sector, to coordinated planning and to strong coordination and cooperation in the implementation phase among the different EU actors and instruments and with a broad range of development partners.

Focus area:

- Assess whether joint/shared analysis of the security sector follows the principles of a Comprehensive Approach, with a view to identifying experiences/lessons learned with regard to joint/shared analysis.

3.3. Tunisia–Coordination of EU support in the field of Counter Terrorism

In recent years new and complex threats have emerged highlighting the need for further synergies and closer cooperation at all levels. Many security concerns originate from instability in the EU's immediate neighborhood and changing forms of radicalization, violence and terrorism.¹⁹

The 9 February 2015 Council conclusions²⁰ defined an EU comprehensive framework guiding its external dimension actions in addressing the threat of terrorism and violent extremism. Stressing the need to further engage with key partner countries, the EU set out the first enhanced political dialogue on security and counter terrorism (CT) with Tunisia on 21 September 2015. In preparation of the dialogue all relevant EU services mapped and analysed needs and next steps. It resulted in the approval of additional EU funded assistance, such as the EUR 23 million ENI Security Sector Reform programme in November 2015, and the agreement of five strategic objectives (1- the implementation of the national CT strategy; 2- the adoption of a comprehensive strategy on countering violent extremism; 3- the reinforcement of judicial approach to the fight against terrorism; 4- reform of security sector; and 5- critical infrastructure and soft target population's protection).

This intensified and upgraded cooperation reaffirms not only the continuous support to Tunisia since the democratic transition in 2011, but also the share of a common analysis on threats and responses. It further highlights the ability for the EU to engage in a unified and consistent way through the association of relevant services and Member States in technical security exchanges and capacity-building assistance.

In line with the Joint Communication on renewed EU support to Tunisia²¹ and with the reviewed European Neighborhood Policy²², where security is identified as a priority, it would be opportune to identify best practices and possible room for improvement in engaging at both an EU political and operational level on security and counter terrorism matters.

¹⁹ COM (2015)185final (28April2015)

²⁰ Council conclusions on counter-terrorism, Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 9 February 2015

²¹ To be adopted in September 2016

²² COM JOIN (2015) 50 final (18.11.2015)

Focus areas:

- Based on experiences in Tunisia assess coordination mechanisms at the EU level (amongst EU services and with Member States) and with other major donors.
- Provide recommendations on how the EU could play a coordination role in challenging international assistance or provide guidance to other international stakeholders and on how the EU could further benefit from technical expertise from Member States.
- Initiate an effective anti-terrorism partnership with the support of relevant EU Agencies and Justice and Home Affairs instruments.

3.4. Kyrgyz Republic

Bilateral relations between the Kyrgyz Republic and the EU have been governed by a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) since its coming into force in 1999. Within the frameworks of the PCA, the EU maintains a comprehensive cooperation on development with the Kyrgyz Republic providing considerable financial assistance for project and budget support.

The PCA is built upon three pillars: political dialogue, economic relations and cooperation in a variety of sectors, such as social, finance, science, technology and culture. Bilateral trade and economic relations between EU and the Kyrgyz Republic have been growing since the partnership was established.

Additionally, the EU supports regional cooperation projects in Central Asia. Under this framework the EU provides support in areas related to security, notably through long-standing border management, water security and drug prevention programmes.

Development cooperation is the backbone of the EU partnership with Kyrgyz Republic. However, there is considerable scope for enhancing the impact of EU action by linking development cooperation with political instruments/diplomacy.

In the context of the Comprehensive Approach it would be relevant to focus on reinforcing synergies between policy objectives and cooperation tools and on conflict sensitive approaches to development projects/programmes.

Focus area:

- Reinforce synergies between policy objectives and cooperation tools to pursue EU interests in Kyrgyz Republic.

3.5. Myanmar

In the past five years, the EU has been at the forefront of the international community's

reengagement with Myanmar. To promote aid effectiveness, the EU and its Member States have been engaged in joint programming of development cooperation since 2014 which is set to continue in close consultation with the new government.

Against the backdrop of political change and opportunity in Myanmar, the EU adopted, in June 2016, a Joint Communication on Elements for an EU strategy vis-à-vis Myanmar/Burma: A special partnership for Democracy, Peace and Prosperity²³. The Joint Communication is setting out a coherent EU vision and concrete commitments in terms of political, security and development support and economic engagement for the years ahead. The EU will support Myanmar in the following areas; (i) Building an inclusive democracy with respect for rule of law and good governance; (ii) promoting peace and national reconciliation; (iii) addressing human rights issues; (iv) contributing to the country's socio-economic development, and general sustainable development; and (v) enhancing economic and business opportunities. Beyond the bilateral relationship, the EU also has an interest to work with the new government in a regional context, especially on the integration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

With the broad range of EU support to Myanmar in terms of instruments and policies, the EU will calibrate in a comprehensive manner all the instruments at its disposal to address the remaining challenges of the transition process.

Focus areas:

- Assess synergies between Joint Programming and the Comprehensive Approach in Myanmar.
- Develop lessons learned on the cooperation among development partners, including the EU and Member States.

4. Implementation and reporting

The Action Plan will be implemented by the responsible EEAS and Commission services in collaboration with Member States and especially with regard to the country and regional cases. The Delegations and Member States' Embassies will play a key role. The different lead services will be responsible for informing the Council according to their respective processes.

The Council will be informed on the implementation of the Action Plan by an oral briefing at the beginning of 2017, and a progress report in the first quarter of 2018. The report will provide an overview of how the strategic priorities have been implemented as well as the key actions for each of the country cases.

²³ JOIN (2016) 24 final (1.6.2016)