

SEVENTH BOARD MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION EMERGENCY TRUST FUND FOR AFRICA

29 September 2020

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MINUTES

The European Commission convened the seventh 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 DEVCO, DG NEAR, DG HOME and DG ECHO); the European External Action Service (EEAS); donor countries, including EU Member States (MS), Switzerland, Norway and United Kingdom; partner countries; and concerned regional organisations. The Director-General of DG DEVCO, Mr Koen Doens, chaired the meeting.

Introductory remarks

In his introductory remarks, the Chair of the Board, thanked the participants for joining the Board Meeting and introduced the agenda of the meeting. He also highlighted the developments since the last Board meeting held in June 2019:

- (i) Overall resources have reached EUR 5 billion (EUR 4.4 billion from the EU and EUR 0.6 billion from MS and other donors);
- (ii) The number of approved programmes have reached 350 for a total of more than EUR 4.7 billion; and signed contracts are now amounting to EUR 3.9 billion, hence, the need to make additional efforts to speed up *contractualization*;
- (iii) In terms of implementation, 35% of the amounts contracted are managed by MS agencies; between 18% and 25% by international and local NGOs (if we consider sub-contracts signed with NGOs buy other implementing partners); 26.4% by UN Agencies; 6% by international organizations; and 15% by partner countries through budget support;
- (iv) Monitoring and learning systems in place keep showing concrete and visible results in terms of outputs;
- (v) In response to COVID-19, substantial efforts have been made to re-orient, accelerate and prioritise actions through different measures including budget increases, front-loading budget support payments and refocusing of activities.

The Chair further stated that, overall, the EUTF Africa has confirmed its added value in reinforcing political and policy dialogue with partner countries; in strengthening further the partnership between the EU and a variety of stakeholders on the ground; in pooling together resources, expertise and experiences from different sources; and in producing concrete and visible results.

The Director-General a.i. of **DG NEAR**, Mr Maciej Popowski, highlighted that:

- (i) The North of Africa window of the EUTF for Africa has exceeded its expectations with resources which progressively increased from EUR 200 million in 2015 to EUR 900, including Member States contributions, in 2020;

- (ii) The Trust Fund has been a key instrument to address migration in the Central and Western Migration Routes;
- (iii) Approximately EUR 175 million are still to be contracted under the North of Africa (NOA) window;
- (iv) Libya remains the partner country with the biggest portfolio in the region, which is carefully monitored.

Mr Popowski presented also some specific results achieved by the North of Africa window of the Trust Fund, and confirmed that the proposed extension would allow to contract funds and welcome new contributions from MS and other donors by the end of 2020 or early 2021.

Stock-taking of progress achieved by the EUTF for Africa

The Director for East and West Africa in **DG DEVCO**, Ms Sandra Kramer, made a presentation on the state of play of the EUTF for Africa as of mid-September 2020. The presentation provided information on overall resources, level of approvals by region, distribution of funding by countries, contributions provided by external donors, and communication activities. The PPT was distributed, as requested, to Board Members and observers. In particular, Ms Kramer emphasized the transparency and visibility of the EUTF for Africa through a complete and regularly updated website, as well as posts and stories regularly published also on social media.

Main findings and conclusions of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the EUTF for Africa

Ms. Kramer made also a brief presentation of the main conclusions highlighted in the draft Final Report of the Mid-Term Review of the EUTF for Africa. This complex and articulated evaluation started in early 2019, included six country visits and was unfortunately delayed due to the COVID-19:

- *Although its full impact will not be known for some time, the EUTF for Africa has provided critically needed resources for improving migration management;*
- *As a short-term emergency instrument, the EUTF Africa had a too wide mandate;*
- *The information base for resource allocations in the EUTF improved over time;*
- *The EUTF governance and management structure was flexible and efficient. It delivered fast decisions based on a strategic overview of the issues as well as knowledgeable and committed staff;*
- *The investments made by the EUTF for Africa for knowledge production, monitoring and reporting provide value-for-money and contributed to more evidence-based interventions;*
- *The EUTF has made modest contributions to increased economic opportunities and employment;*
- *EUTF has ensured increased local and international attention to the migration issue.*

The Final Report will be formally approved once the on-going consultation with MS experts is concluded.

One-year final extension of the EUTF for Africa until 31 December 2021

The Chair indicated that as of 1 January 2021, the EUTF for Africa will not be able to undertake any new commitment, neither approval of new programmes nor signing of new contracts with implementing partners, although implementation of contracted activities will continue until the planned expiration date of each contract. The Commission therefore requested a single and final 12-month extension of the Trust Fund up until 31 December 2021.

Under the proposed extension, the EUTF for Africa will be able to commit resources received in 2020, and in particular will be able to complete and sign contracts to implement recently approved programmes in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The Chair clearly indicated that during the extension period, the Commission would not transfer into the EUTF for Africa resources that will become available under the new instrument (NDICI).

Finally, the Chair indicated that according to Article 234 of the Financial Regulation, the Commission – based on the request of the Board – shall prepare a draft amending Decision on the extension of the Trust Fund and launch the necessary consultations with the European Parliament and Council. The entire procedure for the extension of the Trust Fund should be concluded by mid-December 2020.

Interventions by delegations

The Director for Strategy and General Affairs, **DG HOME**, Mr J. Luchner, underlined that this Board Meeting comes at a critical moment, with the unveiling of the ambitious agenda of the proposed new Pact for Migration and Asylum, in the context of which relations with partner countries will remain a priority. Mr Luchner highlighted that the EUTF for Africa has proved to be an effective tool in the last five years that brought together a variety of inputs and flexible procedures resulting in rapid progress, and that its added-value was also confirmed by ECA's special report issued in 2018. The EUTF was a helpful element in establishing dialogue with partner countries so it will be necessary to consider lessons learned while developing the future work in the area of migration and preserving a suitable level of flexibility. Mr Luchner furthermore stated that the extension would be instrumental in bridging the gap until new funds became available; it would allow transferring the last contribution of the AMIF, bringing DG HOME's contribution to the EUTF to EUR 135 million.

The Director for Sub-Saharan Africa, **DG ECHO**, Ms. A. Koulaimah, highlighted the positive experience of the EUTF for Africa in building the resilience of vulnerable communities, and in fostering synergies and complementarities with EU humanitarian aid programmes and bilateral activities funded by MS. She also recognised the flexibility and adaptability of the Trust Fund and its contribution to strengthen the triple nexus (humanitarian-development-peace nexus).

The Adviser to the Africa Managing Director, **EEAS**, Mr. P. Van Damme was not able to speak during the video-call due to technical problems. However, he shared a written message stating that the EEAS supports the request of a one-year extension of the EUTF for Africa. He added that it is important to draw lessons from the Trust Fund in the framework of the next programming exercise.

MEP, Mr. G. Hovenyi, from **DEVE Committee**, referred positively to the EP field visits in the context of EUTF for Africa programmes in the field, and stressed the need to keep focusing on results achieved. He also stressed the need to improve the organization of Board meetings in consultation with the EP.

MEP, Mr. J. Lewandoski from **BUDG Committee** provided positive feedback on the request for a one-year extension of the EUTF for Africa, and asked that the consultation process with the EP be launched as soon as possible.

Overall, delegations expressed strong support for the progress achieved by the EUTF for Africa since its inception and highlighted that it has proved to be an effective tool in addressing a great number of migration-related issues in the three regions, and in ensuring a good level of partnership and coordination at field level. All delegations recognised the need to allow more time to smoothly sign contracts, which in some cases have been delayed by the COVID-19 crisis, and agreed with the request for a one-year and final extension of the EUTF for Africa up to the end of December 2021. **NL**, in particular, made it clear that NDICI resources should not be channelled into the EUTF for Africa in 2021 and that MS should not be requested to provide additional bilateral resources. Some delegations (**DK, IT**) recognised the need to ensure the continuation of the EU support to address migration challenges until the new aid architecture is operational.

Some delegations (**BE, FR, DE**) expressed interest for the Final Report of the Mid-Term Review of the EUTF for Africa which will provide a full picture of the challenges and the accomplishments of the Trust Fund over the three regions. Lessons learned from the EUTF for Africa will be an essential element of the future work of the EU in these areas. A few delegations (**FR, DE**) indicated that it would be important to preserve flexibility and adaptability for funding strategic objectives under the new funding instrument.

Conclusions

In his concluding remarks, and in response to comments made by delegations, the Chair of the Board highlighted that:

- (i) The Board unanimously agrees with the request to proceed with a single and final 12-month extension of the EUTF for Africa up to 31 December 2021. The Commission confirms that this will be the last extension of the EUTF for Africa and that no resources available under the new instrument NDICI will be channelled to the EUTF for Africa in 2021;
- (ii) Additional contributions may be eventually provided but early enough to ensure that they are fully committed (approved and contracted) before the end of 2021;
- (iii) The Commission will now launch the consultation process with the European Parliament and Council according to Art. 234 of the Financial Regulation;
- (iv) The EUTF for Africa will keep working actively on results, impact on the ground and visibility of the Trust Fund;
- (v) The objectives of the EUTF for Africa remain valid and should inspire future work to be funded under the new instrument (NDICI). Lesson learned exercises will provide an indication of what has worked or not under the EUTF for Africa;

- (vi) It is necessary to keep the strategic approaches flexible at operational level and to use the Team Europe approach as we move on with our work;
- (vii) Post-Cotonou negotiations are progressing well leaving only a few topics open for discussion including the migration chapter.

The Director-General of DG NEAR, Mr. M. Popowski, added that the Commission will do its best to make the consultation process with the European Parliament and Council as smooth and effective as possible.