

Joint press statement following the 8th Association Council between the EU and Egypt

The eighth session of the Association Council (AC) of the European Union and the Arab Republic of Egypt took place in Brussels on 20 December 2018. Both sides recognised the great importance of their partnership in addressing their political, economic, social, security and cultural interests and in confronting their common challenges in the region.

The eighth session was co-chaired by HE Sameh Shoukry, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt and Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in the presence of Johannes Hahn, the Commissioner of European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations.

The session re-confirmed the broader engagement of the EU-Egypt relations, based on the joint Partnership Priorities under the revised European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) as well as the Sustainable Development Strategy: Egypt Vision 2030, which guide our dialogue and cooperation for 2017-2020.

The Association Council addressed the implementation of the joint EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities, adopted during the seventh Association Council in July 2017. The Partnership Priorities provide a basis for a reinforced and mutually beneficial bilateral partnership and a stronger strategic engagement in areas of common interest, to address common challenges, to promote joint interests and to guarantee long-term stability on both sides of the Mediterranean. This partnership includes support to Egypt's sustainable economic and social development, good governance, the rule of law, human rights, migration, security, counterterrorism, and cooperation in foreign policy through intensified consultations on regional and international issues.

The Association Council recognised the solid and accumulated EU cooperation with Egypt, which amounts to over EUR 1.3 billion of ongoing grants, to support Egypt's economic, social and political development to improve the future prospects of its people and contribute to stabilisation and long-term prosperity. This work is carried out in parallel with efforts to help in particular youth and women. The latest project signature is related to the Kitchener Drain depollution project in Egypt and took place in Sharm El Sheikh in early December. The EU investment of EUR 46.9 million will contribute to the development of a sustainable modern economy.

In this context the Association Council welcomed the adoption of the 2018 cooperation package by the European Commission on 29 November 2018, with a focus on key socioeconomic sectors such as energy and water (EUR 20 M); fair access to inclusive basic services to the most vulnerable (EUR 12 M) and complementary support for capacity building (EUR 24 M). The package will also strengthen the role of Egyptian civil society organisations as drivers of social and political development.

The EU reiterated its support to Egypt's efforts to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth, notably through the implementation of the Egyptian reform programme supported by the IMF. Restoring macroeconomic stability and fostering sustainable economic growth while at the same time mitigating the social impact of the reforms are all key priorities.

The Association Council commended Egypt's significant efforts to stop the flux of illegal migration since September 2016 as well as the burden of hosting more than 5 million refugees, including over 500.000 Syrian refugees, in addition to combating trafficking and smuggling of human beings and the implementation of the Valletta Action Plan and the Khartoum process. The EU and Egypt look forward to further strengthening their cooperation on migration, as part of the broader EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities. The EU-Egypt Migration Dialogue is one of the tools to address all aspects of a comprehensive cooperation on migration.

The EU and Egypt remain committed to combating terrorism, which poses a major threat to the security and well-being of our citizens across both sides of the Mediterranean. Combating this threat represents a common goal of the EU and Egypt; they can cooperate through a comprehensive approach that will address the root causes of terrorism with due respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in order to enable both sides to successfully counter and prevent radicalisation and enhance socio-economic development. The EU and Egypt remain committed to cooperating in fighting extremism and any form of discrimination, including Islamophobia and xenophobia.

The Association Council provided an opportunity to identify specific areas where the EU and Egypt could enhance cooperation. In this regard, the EU and Egypt expressed their commitment to continue to cooperate in diversification of energy sources, with a particular focus on renewable energy sources, energy efficiency actions, energy governance as well as the establishment of a regional energy hub in Egypt. The strengthened energy dialogue between the EU and Egypt contributes to the joint research, sharing experience and best practice, technology transfers, as well as sub-regional cooperation.

The Association Council reaffirmed the commitment undertaken by both sides, faced with the common challenge of climate change, through ratification of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The EU reiterated its willingness to support Egypt to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Egypt and the EU highlighted their interest in intensifying cooperation in the field of research and innovation, including through the participation of Egypt in the Partnership on Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA), as well as Horizon-2020 projects and programs. Research and innovation has a key role in tackling issues of shared concern in the Mediterranean area. PRIMA is expected to mobilise joint research and innovation in two fields of strategic importance for the Mediterranean area: water provision and food production. The Association Council also noted the importance of student, staff and researcher exchanges and welcomed Egypt's active participation in EU programmes such as Erasmus+.

Egypt and the EU expressed their commitment to enhancing democracy, fundamental freedoms and human rights as constitutional rights of all their citizens in line with their international obligations, and agreed that human rights are a common value and constitute a cornerstone of a democratic, stable and prosperous state.

The EU and Egypt agreed that civil society is an important and potent contributor to the implementation of their Partnership Priorities and to transparent, participatory governance and can support the sustainable development process underway in Egypt. They will work with civil society in contributing effectively in the economic, political and social development process in compliance with the Egyptian Constitution and national legislation.

The EU and Egypt have a shared interest in reinforcing cooperation in foreign policy at the bilateral, regional and international levels. In line with the Partnership Priorities, Egypt and the EU expressed their continued readiness for greater cooperation and a common understanding of a range of issues, including in the multilateral sphere. The Association Council noted the importance of the partnership between the EU and Egypt for the stability and prosperity of the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa. Further cooperation between the EU and Egypt, including within regional fora, will aim to contribute to the resolution of conflicts, to building peace and to tackling political and economic challenges in these regions.

The EU and Egypt committed to further reinforcing bilateral consultations on issues related the Middle East Peace Process, Syria, Libya, African matters and other major regional and international challenges that affect both sides.

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