

**Senior Officials Meeting - 8-9 February 2017, Malta**  
**Speaking Points – Civil Society**

**Excellences, estimated colleagues, friends of the press,**

Let me start this short intervention by expressing our strongest concerns following the decision that was reached by EU Heads of States and Governments gathered on this island a few days back. The decision was then made to try to stem the migration flow through the Central Mediterranean route notably by reinforcing Libyan border-guard capacities and making it more difficult for migrants to cross the sea. But this decision said little about the consequences it would have on migrants who will then be **trapped** inside Libya while multiple reports have denounced all possible abuses and exactions committed against them.

As well, experience has shown that closing down migration routes was not discouraging refugees and migrants but simply forcing them towards more dangerous ones. We need safer and more legal routes of migrations.

Local and national organizations are an essential part of making protection and safe migration work. African and European civil society organisations have a wealth of expertise and decades of field-based experience in developing approaches and programmes to address crises in Africa.

They can feed policy processes with knowledge of local, national and sub-regional contexts in a way that government authorities can never hope to.

**Despite this, civil society actors have no clear, mandated role in the processes shaping migration in Europe and Africa today.**

--

A recent survey and face-to-face consultation with African and European organisations revealed that processes and policies linked to the Valletta Action Plan lacked transparency. They were deemed opaque.

Currently, civil society actors are neither informed nor consulted about decisions that **profoundly affect migrants and communities in countries of origin, transit and destination** to the extent that the process over the past year has **fuelled mistrust about the objectives of new policies**.

**One year after the launch of the Valletta Action Plan, there is still:**

- **no structured role for civil society organizations to inform these important political processes and interventions.**
- **no clear communication channel between governments and civil society organizations.**

**WE THEREFORE ASK YOU THE FOLLOWING:**

- Civil society must be engaged in migration and mobility dialogue through a structured approach from the highest policy levels **to** implementation on the ground.
- Civil society must have an active and institutionalised role in both the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Action Plan and related measures. Far more nuanced monitoring and evaluation tools are needed to ensure that it is not only aid programmes whose impacts are being assessed, but also legal and policy changes.
- Civil society organizations remind today the EU and its Member States of their commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit, to ensure that 25% of humanitarian funding be allocated “as directly as possible” to local and national agencies. Barriers that prevent local organisations from accessing funding must be removed.

--

TO YOU ALL:

- We ask to **take measures to strengthen and build the capacities** of local and civil society organisations in Africa and in Europe with the aim of building an **effective partnership between civil society and the governments** involved in the implementation of the Valletta Action Plan.

- As part of the condition to grant funding to governments, **African administrations** should provide evidence of high quality engagement and participation with their civil societies and local organisations.
- Regional organisations, such as the **African Union**, and international organisations with mandated protection roles, must have a place in the dialogue, and should not merely be included to 'rubber stamp' decisions already made.

IN ORDER TO FOSTER RESILIENCE among PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES, WE ALSO ASK YOU:

- To ensure that the **experiences of local communities** are brought up and considered at a higher policy level;

We ask you:

- To engage **diaspora groups** holistically, and create opportunities for them to be active in mentoring and in sharing their experiences of forced migration.

We ask you:

- To ensure that civil society organizations are central actors in the social and economic reintegration of returnees in order for these to take place in a dignified manner, respectful of the rights of the returnees and attentive to the situation of the communities.

## **CONCLUSION**

All of this will be difficult to achieve without ensuring a continuous, quality engagement of the civil society, diaspora and local communities.

It is for this reason that civil society organizations are calling today for a clear and structured role in every aspect of the design, implementation and monitoring of migration policies.

**Thank you.**