

Pressreview of the Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development, Rabat 10-11 July 2006

The fallacies of the EU-Africa dialogue on immigration: EU-African ministerial conference on immigration, 10 and 11 July 2006

On 10 and 11 July 2006, a ministerial conference on migration involving ministers from European and African countries took place in Rabat (Morocco), and it appears as good a time as any to highlight the dramatic consequences that cooperation in this field, which the conference seeks to strengthen, is causing on the ground in north African countries, and in terms of political discourse on both shores of the Mediterranean.

The first essay is a viewpoint by Claire Rodier (<http://www.statewatch.org/news/2006/jul/Illegal-emigration.pdf>), president of the Migreurop network, which points out that the notion of "illegal emigration" which is being touted by the EU and is being forced upon African countries (which have adopted draconian legislation to counter it) in exchange for funding, should be banished. The author notes that binding international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and subsequent ones like the 1966 International Covenant on civil and political rights, enshrine the right of people to leave their country, and draws a parallel between the EU-inspired shooting of would-be migrants by Moroccan security forces and comparable events a few decades ago in Soviet-inspired regimes, which were strongly criticised by western European governments at the time.

The second essay, by Peio Aierbe from Mugak (<http://www.statewatch.org/news/2006/jul/sos-migrants-media-peio-2006.pdf>), is an insightful analysis of the way in which the Spanish media misrepresented events in the north African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, presenting them as a medieval assault, when what the migrants (whose numbers were vastly exaggerated) were doing was jumping a border fence in considerable numbers, and they were on the receiving end of the violence that took place, which resulted in many of them dying.

The third essay, was published in Statewatch vol 15 no 2 in March-April 2005 (<http://www.statewatch.org/news/2006/jul/libya.pdf>), and looks at the "dialogue" between the EU and Libya, based on a report by the European Commission's Technical Mission that travelled to Libya in late 2004. It seeks to illustrate the way in which, rather than a "dialogue", this process was more concerned with the imposition of a pre-ordained world-view in relation to the issue of immigration that was developed entirely within the EU, on north African countries. It is significant that disagreements on substantial issues are dismissed in patronising fashion as a failure by Libyan authorities to acknowledge reality. Thus, with regards to Libya, it notes that "there seems to exist [b]Quellen:[b] augenauf Zürich im [urlint <http://www.augenauf.ch/bulli/art/b048a07.php>]Augenauf Bulletin Nr. 48; April 2006[urlint], St. Galler Tagblatt vom 19. Jul 2006ittle understanding of the need for a strategic approach", and objects to "their reluctance to accept the argument that illegal immigration networks are in fact "organised crime" syndicates that "lure migrants to travel across the sea". With regards to Niger (which unlike Libya is a poor country), further concerns are caused by its understanding of migration as "a source of revenue", and its reluctance to impose border controls on neighbours that would harm regional trade networks (as a land-locked country it requires access to ports in neighbouring countries) and the development of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The Council Conclusions on initiating dialogue with Libya displayed the EU's unwillingness to reconsider any of its key assumptions as a result of dialogue with African countries (see, EU/Libya: Full-steam ahead, without pausing to think, Statewatch news online, June 2005, <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2005/jun/01eu-libya.htm>).

Finally, the last document in this series is a statement by European and African NGOs that met on 30 June and 1 July 2006 in Rabat, with a view to presenting their concerns regarding the ministerial conference that is currently underway:

Statement by European and African NGOs on migration, fundamental rights and freedom of movement (<http://www.migreurop.org/article926.html>, in French)

Background documents:

1. Council of the European Union, Brussels, 27 May 2005, doc no: 9413/1/05 REV 1; Note from the Presidency to the Council. Subject: Draft Council Conclusions on initiating dialogue and cooperation with Libya on migration issues (pdf) <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2005/jun/eu-libya-draft-concl.pdf>
2. European Commission: Technical Mission to Libya on illegal immigration - report (pdf) <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2005/jun/eu-libya-draft-concl.pdf>

An open challenge and crucial ethical test for Europe

Commentary by Ferruccio Pastore

Africans represent only around 12 percent of the world's population. But a little less than one-third of the global refugee stock lives in sub-Saharan Africa: 2.6 million out of a total of 8.4 million at the end of 2005 (a figure not including the 4.3 million Palestinians under UNRWA's responsibility). Furthermore, according to some expert estimates, more than half of the growing global number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) - 15 out of 25 million - are also to be found in Africa.

Sub-Saharan Africa is therefore both the largest producer and the largest receiver of forced migration flows worldwide. And the trend is on the rise: During 2005, among the first five countries reporting mass refugee arrivals, four were located in Africa: Chad (32,400 *prima facie* arrivals), Benin (25,500), Uganda (24,000) and Ghana (13,600). Besides, during the same year, all the countries that produced more than 10,000 cross-border forced migration outflows were in Africa as well: Togo (with a mass refugee outflow of 39,100 persons), Sudan (34,500), the Democratic Republic of Congo (15,600), Somalia (13,600) and the Central African Republic (11,500). To this, one should add individual asylum seekers - there were, for instance, 36,200 worldwide from Somalia alone last year.

As for the internal geography of forced migration in Africa, even though East Africa and the Great Lakes region remain the biggest refugee producing and receiving areas, it is no longer true (for many years now) that West Africa is a stable and safe haven where migration has an essentially economic nature. Recent or ongoing conflicts in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo have deeply transformed human mobility patterns in that region as well. The Guinea Gulf coastal strip that used to be essentially a labor-importing region has turned largely into a refugee exporter.

This dramatic situation remains largely confined to the African continent, with very little outpouring to neighboring areas and to Europe in particular. Generally speaking, African forced migrants are too poor and African infrastructures too scarce and decayed to enable the vast majority of refugees to go beyond the closest relatively safe area, be it within the country of origin or right beyond the nearest border. This also explains why 22 of 38 "protracted refugee situations" (defined as 25,000 persons or more living in exile for five or more years) listed by UNHCR at the end of 2003 were actually located in Africa. Most of these short distance exiles live in refugee camps where human rights standards are often equal to or worse than those prevailing in the sending regions at the time of their flight.

Although quantitatively more limited than the European media suggest and European public opinion tends to perceive, sub-Saharan undocumented migration to Europe is nevertheless a real phenomenon and a relatively new one as well. Until the late 1990s, irregular migrants apprehended along the Italian and Spanish coasts or rescued inside (or just outside) those two countries' territorial waters were mostly coming from southeastern Europe, the Maghreb, Turkey or a few large Asian countries (primarily Iraq and Afghanistan).

It is only since the beginning of this century that statistically relevant numbers of Sub-Saharans are able to reach European shores or remote European islands such as the Canaries and European enclaves on the African mainland, such as Ceuta and Melilla. Compared to over 700,000 undocumented migrants who claimed for regularization in Italy in 2002 and over 690,000 who made a similar application in Spain in 2005, a few thousand African clandestine entrants every year are a really marginal phenomenon. But media attention and a high mortality rate understandably make this a big issue. Four times as many migrants are estimated to die while attempting to enter Europe than those found dead at the United States' southern borders. From the policy point of view, the crucial questions are then the following: Are these desperate boat people refugees? Are they entitled to international protection?

If we take Italy as an example, in 2005 60 percent of some 7,000 new asylum applications were by nationals of countries of West Africa or the Horn of Africa, most of whom were smuggled through maritime borders from North Africa. According to the Italian Consortium of Solidarity (ICS), among the largest national groups of African asylum seekers who made an application in Italy, over 97 percent of Eritreans (1,259 out of 1,285 applications), over 57 percent of nationals from Cote d'Ivoire (604 applications) and over 75 percent of Ethiopians (549 applications) were granted either asylum *ex* the Geneva Convention or humanitarian protection. These figures seem therefore to demonstrate that the proportion of "real" refugees among African boat people landing in Europe - in Italy at least - is indeed very significant.

The problem is that reaching the external borders of the European Union has become an extremely risky and daunting task for African migrants, whatever the root causes of their migratory choice. For the past two decades at least, European countries, first individually and more recently through their common institutions, are strongly and consistently pursuing the strategic aim of shifting migration controls outside their territory. Often dubbed "externalization" by migration scholars, this approach is implemented through a variety of technical means, from a huge enhancement of the filtering function of visas to ever harsher forms of responsibility and higher financial sanctions for transport companies that neglect to control their passengers' travel documents.

The ultimate frontier of externalization consists of the outsourcing of sovereign powers, obtained through formal or (more frequently) informal agreements that delegate authorities in third states to implement exit controls at their borders facing the EU or even entry controls, and to effect mass repatriations at their borders with more remote sending or transit countries.

Currently, European externalization efforts focus on North African countries that have emerged as inevitable transit regions in the new geography of undocumented migration to Europe. With some countries, such as Tunisia and to a lesser extent Morocco, cooperation has been successful and transit flows reoriented toward new corridors, in

Libya, Mauritania and Senegal. But beside their short-term, intended effects, externalization policies toward North Africa produce less desirable side effects, from the intensification of pre-existing cross-border tensions (such as between Algeria and Morocco) to the risk of disrupting local migratory and economic circuits (such as between northern Niger and Libya).

Moreover, European externalization practices are seriously jeopardizing asylum rights and substantially weakening international protection obligations, particularly in Africa. As recently stated by UNHCR High Commissioner Antonio Guterres in an official address to the European Parliament, "these barriers are not necessarily aimed at refugees but they do not differentiate between them and other categories of people on the move." Such specific risks are coupled with more general risks of massive human rights violations when the third state to which migration control functions are delegated is marked by low degrees of accountability and transparency of military and police forces.

This was made dramatically evident by the killings of migrants at the Ceuta and Melilla border fences in August-September 2005 and again in Melilla on July 3, 2006. The EU reacted by emphatically re-launching the not-so-new idea of a "balanced and comprehensive approach" to migration management. The limited scope and scarce resources allocated to the EU pilot Regional Protection Programs and the mixed results of the First Euro-African Conference on migration and development held in Rabat on July 10-11 allow for the most lukewarm of hopes. Effectively preventing and lawfully dealing with African forced migration remains an open challenge and a crucial ethical and political test for Europe.

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Monday, July 17, 2006, The Daily Star, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=5&article_id=74004#

Small country, big problem

Michael Frendo. International Herald Tribune

VALLETTA, Malta Illegal immigration is a real problem for all of us, but more so for some. If 75,000 illegal immigrants suddenly arrived in France or 50,000 illegal immigrants landed on Spain's shores, would that hit the news? This is the equivalent, in terms of population density, of what Malta has experienced in the past two weeks.

A few days ago, at the Rabat conference on migration and development, Nicolas Sarkozy, interior minister of France, correctly said that last year's tragic events in which 14 migrants were killed at Spanish enclaves on the North African coast touched the hearts of Europeans.

In Malta, we find dead bodies floating in the Mediterranean regularly. We receive a steady flow of boatloads of illegal immigrants.

The smaller and the more densely populated the country, the bigger the problem. Malta is the second most densely populated country in the world at almost 1300 people per square kilometer. For the Maltese, illegal immigration is not just another problem to address with a conference - this is an issue of vital importance.

At the meeting in Rabat, I asked our African "brothers" to understand Malta's plight. I called them "brothers" even though Malta is a member of the European Union: Like the nations of Africa, we were colonized; we suffered the traumas of colonization and decolonization; we had migrants who left because our economy could not sustain them.

In the complex reality of illegal immigration, there is no such thing as a single migratory route. International criminal organizations send illegal immigrants along various paths. A main one connects Libya with Malta and Italy.

Malta even receives illegal migratory flows from West Africa. Statistics using data from the past 18 months show that Malta has illegal immigrants from Benin, Burkina Faso, Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

So the international community cannot compartmentalize this issue. Migratory routes are interlinked; international criminal organizations make sure of that. For them, transporting migrants is big business.

What is the solution? We can only have a comprehensive plan. We must not close one road for the traffickers and leave "softer" options open. Along with joint patrolling of the west Mediterranean, we must have joint patrolling in the central Mediterranean area. The message to criminal organizations must be that no route will be easy anymore. The Morocco conference was only a step. The EU- AU Tripoli ministerial conference must follow without delay. The Morocco declaration calls for it to be held this year.

All countries must fight international criminal organizations. And international law should be respected. Article 13 of the Cotonou agreement signed by African countries calls for the repatriation of illegal migrants. This must be followed by all nations.

Development assistance is clearly a very important part of the solution to ensure that people retain the hope to make a living for themselves and their families in their own societies.

In all this we must retain an unremitting commitment to provide full protection to refugees and persons requiring humanitarian status.

We need urgent action. For the 400,000 citizens of my country crammed in 316 square kilometers, this is truly vital. Malta needs help - now.

Michael Frendo is minister of foreign affairs of Malta.

July 16, 2006, *International Herald Tribune*, <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2006/07/16/opinion/edfrendo.php>

The Euro-African migration conference: Africa sells out to Europe

Gregor Noll, 14-7-2006

The Rabat gathering's "plan of action" to control migration flows from south to north is based on a faulty diagnosis and will not succeed even in its own terms, says Gregor Noll

In Rabat, Morocco, fifty-eight European and African states met on 10-11 July 2006 for a unique conference - the Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development. Its conclusions, especially the "Rabat plan of action" that trades African cooperation in helping to restrict migration in return for European development assistance, have been widely welcomed. But the real story of Rabat is of failure and misunderstanding, as I shall explain.

The reason for such an exercise in integrated, intercontinental diplomacy is evident. In the first half of 2006, some 9,000 undocumented migrants have arrived at the shores of Spain's Canary Islands after perilous crossings in small boats - more than the number for the whole of 2005. A week before the conference began, two Africans died after falling off the six-metre fence at the Spanish enclave of Melilla, part of the external border of the European Union. In autumn 2005, five Africans died - allegedly shot by Moroccan border police - when trying to cross the fence of the Ceuta enclave along the coast. It happens that the European Union is funding part of Morocco's border-control effort.

A significant part of the plan of action agreed at Rabat focuses on repressive measures: one item is a comprehensive reinforcement of border control by air, naval and police forces (African included); another concerns "readmission agreements" between target, transit and source countries, so as to facilitate return of undocumented Africans; a third deals with enhanced registration of African migrants.

But other measures envisaged by the plan appear to be more on the persuasive side. They include boosting development assistance to African economies, so as to pre-empt the need for migration; improving access to higher education for Africans (in both Africa and Europe); and a proposal to introduce temporary migrant-labour schemes for Africans wishing to work in Europe. The Europeans have promised to give EUR 18 billion (\$22.7 billion) to support its African partners in the coming seven-year period.

The Rabat context

What happened in Rabat? Swedish migration minister Barbro Holmberg claimed that it was an "historic event", as she pointed out that Africans and Europeans had for the first time assembled to discuss migration and development in conjunction. Others regard it as a good thing that European and African governments join hands to stop human smuggling and to create employment opportunities in northern and sub-Saharan Africa; and that an increasingly militarised migration control is acceptable if it eliminates the need for migration by encouraging development.

But the background of the Rabat conference suggests a different interpretation. During the 1990s, governments in the global south pushed for a United Nations world conference on migration - modelled on those held on the environment, on human rights and on development. Their colleagues in the north could hardly be less interested. The south wished to link migration to development at an early stage; the north wanted to improve migration control first. As the number of arrivals at the Canary Islands, Lampedusa and Malta grows exponentially, and more lives are lost at the frontiers of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, the Europeans have changed their minds.

In any case, will the Rabat plan of action have the intended effect of decreasing undocumented migration from Africa to Europe? Even if it were binding and implemented to the letter, my answer would be no.

The reasons for this judgment are primarily economic. Both immigrants with residence permits and undocumented migrants send part of their earnings to family members remaining in the country of origin. Altogether, these so-called "remittances" - exceeded by foreign direct investments, but greater than international aid - form the second most important source of income for many states in the south.

In 1999, remittances to less developed countries amounted to \$60 billion. Such figures emphasise that emigrant-producing countries in the south would be foolish to prevent their citizens from travelling to and working in the European Union. This would entail a dramatic fall in their income. At the same time, it is politically improbable that the EU will in the foreseeable future increase aid to a level equivalent to "buying out" the value of such remittances. The annual sum of EUR 2.5 billion (\$3.16 billion) offered to the African participants by the Europeans in Rabat is not trivial, but is far less than would be needed for such a "buy-out". The conclusion must be that the EU and its member-states do not possess the economic muscle required to match that of the migrant networks. This fundamental fact is often forgotten in "the fight against illegal immigration". If African governments accept a deal that disadvantages their countries and peoples in financial terms, it must really be in bad faith.

A Mediterranean "Berlin wall"

The logic of this approach is that neither liberalisation nor control can regulate undocumented migration and informal labour markets out of existence.

First, liberalisation: the argument here (embodied in the Rabat plan of action) would be to allow more people to migrate in order to "dry up" undocumented migration and the informal labour market for migrants. This strategy would not succeed, for two reasons: the EU will continue to attract migrant workers for years, with consequences that would circumvent any legal framework; and the contrast between migrants' countries and the EU - in employment opportunities and the human-rights protection - will take equally long to bridge (and be far more complex and lengthy than the process of integration into the European Union of the accession countries of east-central Europe).

Migration researchers call the relationship between income adjustment and migration as "the migration hump": as long as significant differences in income persist, many people will continue to migrate (see the paper by Hein de Haas for the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM)). It is only when differences are evened - to a level between, say, Sweden and Poland - that the number of migrants will be reduced to a trickle; only does the migration curve flatten and is the "hump" overcome. From a political point of view, the migration hump is an obstacle to a thoroughgoing legalisation strategy, since EU citizens rightly suspect that a large, income-equalising, global migration would entail serious consequences for the material privileges they enjoy.

Second, control: the argument here is one that has been heavily pursued by the EU and its member-states. In the 1990s, programmes were launched that exchanged information and experience, invested military resources in border surveillance, and created an EU-wide border-control authority. Yet each time control increases at particular entry-points or new control techniques are implemented, the flow of migration moves to another point or smugglers and migrant networks respond with counter-strategies.

These cat-and-mouse tactics can have fatal results, and co-opting African military and security agencies in the European cause of anti-migration policy will invariably heighten the dangers.

There are geographic-political borders, and there are legal ones. During the cold war, liberal democracies insisted on the very human right that everyone should be free to leave any country, including his or her own. There were and are good reasons to insist on this. The democratic entitlement to "vote with our feet" can work even in and against dictatorships.

The Rabat conference might be remembered as the occasion when some African governments sold out this human right at the behest of Europeans, in return for conditional development assistance. As a result, the Mediterranean "Berlin wall" made of water and razor wire will persist, and proliferate in the African continent. Poverty in Africa will persist, and so will violations of human rights. The only thing that will diminish as a result is the exit options of Africans.

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Also by Gregor Noll in openDemocracy, as part of our "people flow" debate: "Visions of the exceptional" (27 June 2003)

14 Jul 2006, http://www.opendemocracy.net/people-migrationeurope/migration_conference_3738.jsp

Also in openDemocracy on migration, Africa, and "people flow":

- Ivan Briscoe, "Dreaming of Spain: migration and Morocco" (27 May 2004): <http://www.opendemocracy.net/articles/View.jsp?id=1919>
- Michele Wucker, "Don't get immigration wrong - again" (20 June 2006): <http://www.opendemocracy.net/articles/View.jsp?id=3663>
- Saskia Sassen "Migration policy: from control to governance" (13 July 2006): <http://www.opendemocracy.net/articles/View.jsp?id=3735>

UN action plan to protect rights in migratory movements

ANKARA - Turkish Daily News

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres has called for governments and regional, international and nongovernmental organizations to work together to uphold the rights of refugees and migrants in mixed migratory movements.

Unveiling a 10-point action plan at the Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development in Rabat earlier this week, Guterres stated that the current movement of people from Africa towards Europe, due to its irregular nature, presented a number of challenges to European and African states.

The plan agreed by the Rabat conference is expected to have an impact on the migration and asylum policies of Turkey, entered by thousands of mixed groups of migrants and refugees both from the Mediterranean/Aegean coasts and from the country's eastern borders.

He said the Rabat meeting, which brings together some 60 European and African countries, provided a timely forum to explore two important and related issues -- migration and development. „It is precisely because they are unable to exercise their right to development that so many people -- including migrants who are looking for a better

standard of living and refugees who are looking for safety and security -- feel obliged to leave their own country and move elsewhere."

"While we must maintain this fundamental distinction between refugees and migrants, we must also recognize that both forms of mobility are often rooted in the broader problem of underdevelopment. I hope that this conference will enable the states of Africa and Europe to formulate cooperative approaches to the challenge of development -- approaches that can help us to create the conditions that enable people to migrate out of choice, rather than necessity."

Guterres called for "special attention" to be paid to the phenomenon of so-called "mixed movements" in which migrants and refugees move alongside each other, often in an irregular manner, using similar routes and modes of transport. Such movements are termed "irregular" because they often take place without the requisite documentation and frequently involve human smugglers. People who move in this manner often place their lives at risk, are obliged to travel in inhumane conditions and may be exposed to exploitation and abuse. States regard such movements as a threat to their sovereignty and security.

Turkey, which is partly an eastern Mediterranean country and partly a country neighboring with Asia and the Middle East, has also been subject to the mixed population movements. A recent heavy loss of life in a traffic accident on a highway in Southeast Turkey on May 19 as well as the rescue of 22 people whose vessel had sunk in the Aegean Sea by the crew of a Dutch-registered cruise ship are only among the most recent examples highlighting the dangers posed by the absence of a regime to uphold the rights of refugees and migrants in mixed migratory movements.

The UNHCR 10-point plan sets out key areas in which action is required to address the issues of mixed and irregular migratory movements in a coherent and practical way -- in countries of origin, transit and destination.

Friday, July 14, 2006, <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=48814>

Immigration: Refugee Agency asked to intervene

New York, 14 July (AKI) - A group of nearly 60 European and African countries have asked the United Nations refugee agency to help them tackle the sometimes deadly wave of irregular immigration from sub-Saharan Africa into Europe, a flow that frequently involves human traffickers. The issue is of specific concern to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in that refugees often travel alongside migrants as part of mixed migratory movements, the world body said in a statement on Thursday.

In a declaration signed in the Moroccan capital Rabat on Tuesday, ministers from 57 countries agreed to form a close partnership to try to manage the unauthorized immigration - in which most people lack the requisite documentation - "in an optimum fashion and in a spirit of shared responsibility."

They committed themselves to a "comprehensive, balanced, pragmatic and operational approach" and to respect the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees. The Rabat declaration also recognized "the need to provide adequate international protection in accordance with the international obligations of the partner countries."

It invited international organizations, including UNHCR, to help carry out the agreed recommendations, and Sweden announced that it would provide funding for a 10-point action plan outlined to participants by UNHCR chief Antonio Guterres.

The plan, which seeks to address mixed and irregular migration while protecting the rights of refugees and migrants, calls for judicial and police cooperation against human trafficking and the crime networks that operate irregular immigration routes. Navy, air and land forces would also cooperate in identifying the routes used by migrants.

The conference was called amid a surge in the number of Africans arriving in countries such as Italy and Spain, often crossing the high seas in rickety and rusty vessels. Signatories of the Rabat declaration will meet again within the next four years to review progress in the plan.

Refugees and asylum seekers account for a relatively small proportion of the estimated 200 million people on the move in the world today. In many cases, however, refugees travel alongside migrants as part of mixed migratory movements.

(Rar/Aki)

Jul-14-06 09:43, http://www.adnki.com/index_2Level_English.php?cat=Politics&loid=8.0.320820273&par=0

Rabat to host junior African athletics championship

RABAT, July 13 -- Rabat, the Moroccan capital will at the weekend host the African junior athletics championship for the Northern Zone, official sources said here Wednesday.

Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and the host country will take part in the event.

Morocco, which did very well in previous championships, will be fielding 86 athletes in various disciplines at the

Saturday and Sunday meet.

Last September in Tunisia, Morocco's Fatima El Faquir, former Arab and African 400m hurdles female champion, was elected President of the Northern Zone of the continental competition. - angop

13. Jul 2006, <http://news.africastv.com/africastv/article.php?newsID=59268>

Considered by Sahrawi as insecurity and instability source

Paris and Madrid accused of cheering Rabat

Frames of the Summer University of the Polisario Front, have indicated yesterday that what can help Morocco was to push it to respect the legitimate international decisions, considering that the congress on immigration, concluded in Morocco, was like an attempt of France and Spain to give it a new breath and to encourage it to continue its illegal occupation of the Western Sahara and to prolong the conflict.

These frames of this university, which was concluded at Algiers, have estimated in an official statement that Morocco "would remain a source of insecurity and instability not only for its neighbours but also for the European continent", as long as it was not obliged to respect international legitimacy, as indicated by this same official statement, especially "that in relation to the human rights and that approved and signed by him and relating to the payment of the business of the Sahara".

Participants in this university, held within the framework of the week of the Arab Republic Democratic Sahraoui in Algeria, have criticized the congress of immigration concluded in Morocco last week, they seen it as "a despaired attempt", even if seemingly it "seeks mechanisms to decrease by the intensity of the phenomenon of illegal immigration", in order to give to Morocco a new breath, in particular that it "lives constantly under the pressure of the problems and the crises which threaten it of explosion".

These frames have expressly accused France and Spain to encourage Morocco and "to reinforce the position of its traditional aggression and to try to show it as an actor of the continent whereas it has withdrawn from it and what has followed of get out of the continental organization and its continual failures.

2006-07-13, By M. Chaouki, El Khabar, <http://www.elkhabar.com/FrEn/lire.php?ida=36731&idc=52>

Euro-African ministers okay more aid for Africa

Foreign affairs and the interior ministers from African and European countries have risen from their two-day summit with a resolve to give more aid and grants to sub-Saharan Africa.

By Oghogho Obayuwana

They also stressed the urgent need to help develop the poorer countries by facilitating the inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI).

The 20-point declaration adopted at their meeting in Rabat, the Moroccan capital, followed ministers' recognition that "migratory flows cannot be achieved through control measures only, but also require a concerted action on the root causes of migration in particular through the implementation of development projects in Africa".

There is to be a follow up and implementation of the action plan, which will determine the volume of aid and its rapid administration. Libya has offered to host the proposed conference before the end of the year to fashion out the joint strategy of advancing the tenets of the Rabat declaration as well as convening of the second EU-Africa summit to be held in Lisbon, Portugal "as soon as possible".

A major summit declaration also includes joint monitoring of sea and border routes, while poverty is to be tackled through aids.

Other plans include a migration observatory to track people's movements, measures to increase awareness of the dangers of illegal migration, financial aid and employment incentives.

Countries will also attempt to jointly target human trafficking networks through co-ordinated police and judicial efforts.

The conference said the repatriation of illegal migrants is now to be made easier, with clearer rules on how they should be treated to preserve their dignity.

Addressing the press shortly after the summit ended, the Moroccan secretary of state for foreign affairs, Fassi Fihri, said the new declarations calls for closer collaboration between neighbouring and far-flung countries.

Fihri, however, responding to a question on collaboration between immigration officials of transit and destination countries with known barons of human trafficking racket in Nigeria said: "The vision of Europe now is economic and policy issues, not just the cheap solutions but the economics of it...the route of illegal migration is the same with those of drug traffickers and the mafia behind it. The solution that we are working at is ending the activities of this mafia group. And this work is all about us, Africa and Europe."

Algeria snubs talks

African delegates were excited by comments by the French President Jacques Chirac in which he mused that emigration is at the heart of the relations between Europe and Africa.

For him, "It's an economic issue, given the wealth differential between our two continents. It's a demographic issue, given the explosion of the African population, scheduled by 2050 to more than double from 900 million inhabitants today to almost two billion. It's a political and security issue, and everyone appreciates its serious implications.

"No one very happily leaves home, family and friends. So long as Africa has millions of men and women ready to risk everything in the hope of a better life - as we have seen with horror in Ceuta, Melilla, the Canaries and Lampedusa - we will not resolve the problem... Let us offer Africa's young people a future of dignity. Then, they will not risk succumbing to violence and extremism, or choose, in droves, the path of exile," he added.

Absent at the conference was the Algerian delegation. Observers maintained on Wednesday that Algeria, a key Maghreb nation, snubbed the summit probably due to its deteriorating relations with the Kingdom of Morocco over support for the cause of the Saharawi "Arab Republic".

Moroccan diplomats think that country is phantom. Participants, however, kept mute over the absence.

Also absent at the conference were officials of Idia Renaissance and Women and Child Trafficking in Persons Foundation (WOTCLEF), non governmental organisations (NGOs) from Nigeria, which are at the very heart of advocacy and rehabilitation of trafficked persons.

Mexico, a central American country, participated in the summit as an observer.

Besides Nigeria, the countries which ministers were in Rabat were Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Guinea Equatorial, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland and Italy, among others.

Guardian News

13. Jul 2006, <http://www.andnetwork.com/index?service=direct/0/Home/recent.fullStory&sp=144282>

Chirac seeks more cooperation on immigration issues

Rabat, Morocco, 07/13 - French President Jacques Chirac has affirmed that the just-ended Euro-Africa ministerial Conference on migration and development in Rabat "should involve us in a strong and more efficient co-operation between countries of origin, transit and destination in order to curb illegal immigration".

"We all must shoulder the challenge of migration, in a spirit of partnership and shared responsibility. Every European and African should participate in the efforts to control the phenomenon and curb its root causes," Chirac pointed out in a message delivered in Rabat during Euro-Africa conference attended by some 60 countries.

Moreover, Chirac noted that meeting that challenge depends on the confirmation of "Europe's commitment towards Africa in development partnership," and urged Europe "to take advantage of the African dynamism, talents and enterprising minds of Africans".

He emphasised the need to help Africa overcome pandemics which are threatening it, provide basic education to all, achieve essential infrastructure in the areas of transport, water, energy and telecommunications.

The acceleration of the growth of the African continent, which, he noted, should reach about 6% this year, must prompt Europe to increase its effort as the member countries of the European Union committed last year by deciding, on France's initiative, to increase their aid to the continent by E16 billion annually by 2010.

13. Jul 2006, <http://www.angolapress-angop.ao/noticia-e.asp?ID=455460>

EU pledges euro5.6 billion to improve African road, energy, IT networks

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) _ The European Commission on Thursday pledged euro5.6 billion (US\$7.12 billion) to develop roads and energy, water and telecommunications networks in Africa to stimulate economic growth and social development.

The funds are to be used from 2008-2013 on targeted projects across Africa that will improve infrastructure and services, EU Development Commissioner Louis Michel said, citing programs in countries ranging from Senegal to Namibia.

"Over the next few years this should have a direct impact on the lives of millions of Africans. This partnership will allow Africa to build the infrastructure that is so crucial for a real economic boost," Michel said.

"Traveling in Africa is, at the moment, 2-3 times more expensive than elsewhere in the world. Getting produce from A to B is extremely expensive, sometimes not possible at all, given the state of the roads, if the roads exist in the first place. That's a major handicap," he added.

There are few road networks in Africa, and the ones that exist are often poorly maintained. More than 300 million

Africans _ or 42 percent of the continent's population _ do not have access to clean water, according to EU figures, and the lack of telecommunications infrastructure means phone calls between African countries have to be routed via other continents.

Infrastructure helps population to get organized. Countries with good infrastructure tend to be peaceful countries that don't attack each other," Michel said.

The EU is trying to curb immigration from Africa through various aid schemes. Last month the EU executive proposed stimulating the economies of the countries of the migrants' origin and transit countries such as Mauritania or Morocco as one way of keeping migrants at home.

Earlier this week, delegates from 58 European and African countries meeting in Rabat, Morocco, adopted a road map for curbing the growing illegal immigration to Europe by tackling the chronic African poverty that fuels it. The plan spelled out a list of proposals on how countries can work together to target aid money and promote growth in Africa.

13 Jul 2006, Written by AP, http://planetsave.com/ps_mambo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7509&Itemid=68

To fight on illegal immigration Central department to be created soon

Well informed sources have indicated yesterday at the margin of opened doors organized by the borders' police in the international airport of Essania at Oran that the ministry will create a central office for the fight against illegal immigration which will be operational soon.

The preparation of the creation of a central office, which will be in charge of the illegal immigration, is going on, and this considering the dangerous perspectives of the phenomenon in the last few years. The same sources have revealed during the opened doors, where was present the Director General of National Safety, yesterday in Oran, the efforts and measures which are currently taken in order to provide means on which will base the office in its functions, affirming that the office was going soon to begin its functions and it will be accompanied by the services borders' police.

These measures are explained by the dangerous situation of the phenomenon of illegal immigration, the wilaya of Oran has recorded an exceptional floc of illegal immigrants of various nationalities, and in particular the Africans who activate in several fields, what represents a real obsession for the inhabitants, with the propagation of the diseases, in addition to several offences like the falsification of the tickets of currency, knowing that the services of national Gendarmerie registered during the year the 2005 arrest of 332 illegal immigrants, including 189 Malians, 109 of Morocco and 34 of Niger.

In addition, the Police Commissioner Mimane Abdelghani, regional Direction of the police force of the borders has revealed yesterday a new program for the intensification of the number of agents, in addition to the improvement of the training level considering the development of the crime, affirming that one bases oneself currently especially on the training specialized in varied fields, and this in coordination with the international office of the borders' police.

By Mohamed Derki

2006-07-13, *El Khabar*, <http://www.elkhabar.com/FrEn/lire.php?id=36733&idc=52>

Considered by Sahrawi as insecurity and instability source Paris and Madrid accused of cheering Rabat

By M. Chaouki

Frames of the Summer University of the Polisario Front, have indicated yesterday that what can help Morocco was to push it to respect the legitimate international decisions, considering that the congress on immigration, concluded in Morocco, was like an attempt of France and Spain to give it a new breath and to encourage it to continue its illegal occupation of the Western Sahara and to prolong the conflict.

These frames of this university, which was concluded at Algiers, have estimated in an official statement that Morocco "would remain a source of insecurity and instability not only for its neighbours but also for the European continent", as long as it was not obliged to respect international legitimacy, as indicated by this same official statement, especially "that in relation to the human rights and that approved and signed by him and relating to the payment of the business of the Sahara".

Participants in this university, held within the framework of the week of the Arab Republic Democratic Sahraoui in Algeria, have criticized the congress of immigration concluded in Morocco last week, they seen it as "a despaired attempt", even if seemingly it "seeks mechanisms to decrease by the intensity of the phenomenon of illegal immigration", in order to give to Morocco a new breath, in particular that it "lives constantly under the pressure of the problems and the crises which threaten it of explosion".

These frames have expressly accused France and Spain to encourage Morocco and "to reinforce the position of its traditional aggression and to try to show it as an actor of the continent whereas it has withdrawn from it and what has followed of get out of the continental organization and its continual failures.

2006-07-13, <http://www.elkhabar.com/FrEn/lire.php?id=36731&idc=52>

PanAfrica: UN Refugee Agency Asked to Help in Tackling Migration From Africa to Europe

UN News Service (New York), July 13, 2006

A group of nearly 60 European and African countries have asked the United Nations refugee agency to help them tackle the sometimes deadly wave of irregular immigration from sub-Saharan Africa into Europe, a flow that frequently involves human traffickers.

The issue is of specific concern to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in that refugees often travel alongside migrants as part of mixed migratory movements.

In a declaration signed in the Moroccan capital Rabat on Tuesday, ministers from 57 countries agreed to form a close partnership to try to manage the unauthorized immigration - in which most people lack the requisite documentation - "in an optimum fashion and in a spirit of shared responsibility."

They committed themselves to a "comprehensive, balanced, pragmatic and operational approach" and to respect the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees. The Rabat declaration also recognized "the need to provide adequate international protection in accordance with the international obligations of the partner countries."

It invited international organizations, including UNHCR, to help carry out the agreed recommendations, and Sweden announced that it would provide funding for a 10-point action plan outlined to participants by UNHCR chief Antonio Guterres.

The plan, which seeks to address mixed and irregular migration while protecting the rights of refugees and migrants, calls for judicial and police cooperation against human trafficking and the crime networks that operate irregular immigration routes. Navy, air and land forces would also cooperate in identifying the routes used by migrants.

The conference was called amid a surge in the number of Africans arriving in countries such as Italy and Spain, often crossing the high seas in rickety and rusty vessels. Signatories of the Rabat declaration will meet again within the next four years to review progress in the plan.

Refugees and asylum seekers account for a relatively small proportion of the estimated 200 million people on the move in the world today. In many cases, however, refugees travel alongside migrants as part of mixed migratory movements.

July 13, 2006, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200607130663.html>

Intl. Intelligence

Politics & Policies: A real global village

By CLAUDE SALHANI, UPI International Editor

RABAT, Morocco, July 13 (UPI) -- What does an illegal migrant from Cameroon, Burkina Faso, or anywhere else in sub-Saharan Africa have in common with a European living in Helsinki, Lisbon, Madrid, Warsaw, Paris or Rome, or anywhere else in Europe?

The answer is much more complex than it would initially seem. For example, what possible interest do Europeans have that Africans, particularly those in poor and under-developed nations in sub-Saharan Africa, be they from Cameroon, Burkina, or elsewhere, be able to find employment in their home countries before they embark upon the long and often perilous road to self-imposed exiles, roads that will eventually take them north to Helsinki, Paris, Rome, Madrid or elsewhere. But first it will take them to Morocco.

Every year tens of thousands of Africans, if not more, leave their homes, escaping wars, civil strife, dictatorships, hunger, unemployment and ethnic tensions, looking for a safer environment for themselves and their families. Others, still, are drawn to Europe by the lures of a better and easier life.

And every year thousands die, as they drown in the icy waters of the Atlantic Ocean, as they attempt to cross to the Spanish Canary Islands, Europe's first outpost in Africa. And every year thousands more perish in the vast expanse of the Sahara Desert when their cars break down miles from anywhere as they try to avoid regular border crossings. Stranded without water they barely last a few hours.

One biochemist who trekked three months from his native Cameroon to the Moroccan capital, Rabat, walking most of the way through Nigeria, Niger, Libya and Algeria before reaching Morocco told United Press International he saw hundreds of bodies in the desert, the remains of the far less fortunate would-be immigrants.

Whatever their destination might be, assuming they reach it, the immigrant will join millions of others illegal migrants in becoming a burden on the European country's already heavy tax burden. The illegal immigrant will join tens of hundreds of others or maybe even hundreds of thousands of others from his home country, or if those are few and hard to find, he will join other Africans in sharing their meager existence. Often, Africans coming from ethnicities that back home would be slaughtering one another, in exile can become the best of friends, as they unite out of necessity in an alien and often unwelcoming world.

For the most part, many immigrants, particularly newer arrivals, are housed in shantytowns in the worst parts of the cities, in out of the way slums; in areas most Europeans would prefer to pretend that the immigrants -- and their slums -- simply do not exist. The illegal immigrants arrive in these cities, adding to the high unemployment rate,

taxing the social services, usually already stretched thin.

And the problem is not about to get any better anytime soon, unless drastic measures are taken. One obvious point upon which some 60 African and European ministers meeting for two days in Rabat earlier this week agreed upon was that deterrence alone would not work.

"Not through security measures alone," Andre Obame, Gabon's minister of the interior, security and immigration told United Press International at the close of the two-day international conference called at the behest of the Moroccans.

Morocco's communication minister, Mohammad Nabil Benabdallah, concurs that all the security measures in the world will not prevent clandestine immigration. What is called for is a combined effort between the Africans and Europeans.

"What is needed is a Marshall Plan for Africa," the kind that saved post-World War II Europe from ruin, Benabdallah, who is also the government's spokesman, told UPI.

"The European countries have understood that a poor Africa will produce immigrants. Thus the better way of fighting against illegal immigrants would be to fix them at home. And fixing them at home means to provide them with the means to develop themselves," Obame told UPI.

The answer -- in part -- is for Europe, the final destination of the majority of the illegal travelers, to help develop Africa, creating an economic and social atmosphere on the continent that would encourage the would-be migrants to stay at home. Sort of engineering reverse colonialism but without its ill effects.

(Comments may be sent to Claude@upi.com)

*7/13/2006 12:22:00 PM -0400, United Press International,
<http://www.upi.com/InternationalIntelligence/view.php?StoryID=20060712-082053-5902r>*

UNHRC asked to tackle migration from Africa to Europe

By ANDnetwork .com

A group of nearly 60 European and African countries have asked the United Nations refugee agency to help them tackle the sometimes deadly wave of irregular immigration from sub-Saharan Africa into Europe, a flow that frequently involves human traffickers.

The issue is of specific concern to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in that refugees often travel alongside migrants as part of mixed migratory movements. In a declaration signed in the Moroccan capital Rabat on Tuesday, ministers from 57 countries agreed to form a close partnership to try to manage the unauthorized immigration - in which most people lack the requisite documentation - "in an optimum fashion and in a spirit of shared responsibility." They committed themselves to a "comprehensive, balanced, pragmatic and operational approach" and to respect the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees. The Rabat declaration also recognized "the need to provide adequate international protection in accordance with the international obligations of the partner countries." It invited international organizations, including UNHCR, to help carry out the agreed recommendations, and Sweden announced that it would provide funding for a 10-point action plan outlined to participants by UNHCR chief António Guterres. The plan, which seeks to address mixed and irregular migration while protecting the rights of refugees and migrants, calls for judicial and police cooperation against human trafficking and the crime networks that operate irregular immigration routes. Navy, air and land forces would also cooperate in identifying the routes used by migrants. The conference was called amid a surge in the number of Africans arriving in countries such as Italy and Spain, often crossing the high seas in rickety and rusty vessels. Signatories of the Rabat declaration will meet again within the next four years to review progress in the plan. Refugees and asylum seekers account for a relatively small proportion of the estimated 200 million people on the move in the world today. In many cases, however, refugees travel alongside migrants as part of mixed migratory movements. UN News/mm

July 13, 2006, <http://humanrights.andnetwork.com/index?service=direct/1/Home/recent.titleStory&sp=144429>

Analysis: Illegal migrants challenge both Africa and Europe Security measures are not enough

By Claude Salhani, UPI International Editor

RABAT, Morocco--How do you stop millions of jobless, hungry, frightened war-wary Africans from trekking north across the Sahara Desert into Morocco and from there hopefully to Europe; braving along the way modern day traders in human lives, treacherous seas they navigate aboard un-seaworthy death traps and tens of thousands of security personnel deployed with the sole purpose of stopping them?

"Not through security measures alone," replies Andre Obame, Gabon's Minister of the Interior, Security and Immigration while speaking to United Press International in the Moroccan capital, Rabat, at the close of a two-day international conference gathered here at the behest of the Moroccans who find themselves at both the receiving

end of immigrants, and as an "exporter of immigrants."

Other senior officials, including Morocco's communication minister, Mohammad Nabil Benabdallah, agrees that all the security measures in the world will not prevent clandestine immigration. In fact, the final communiqué published by the closing session, Tuesday, makes it clear that new thinking is needed. Such novelty may be found in the buzzword of the two-day conference coined: "the spirit of Rabat."

"The European countries have understood that a poor Africa will produce immigrants. Thus the better way of fighting against illegal immigrants would be to fix them at home. And fixing them at home means to provide them with the means to develop themselves," Obama told UPI.

For the millions of would-be immigrants from Africa, like in Humphrey Bogart's epic movie "Casablanca," Morocco represents the last roadblock to Europe and freedom, or the first serious hurdle between Africa and Europe. Except that in the movie people were trying to get from Casablanca south, into Africa when they couldn't get on the flight to Lisbon.

The participating countries -- there were 59 of them, from Austria to the United Kingdom and the European Commission -- recognized that "the destinies of our countries are linked and that only the development of an effective, rapid and tangible solidarity embodying both the imperatives of sustainable development and security for all will be able to offer a lasting answer to the management of migratory flows."

The committee said it was "conscient that the management of migratory flows cannot be achieved through control measures only, but also requires a concerted effort at the root causes of migration."

Marshall Plan for Africa needed

The countries attending the conference committed themselves to:

- Creating and developing a close partnership between the respective countries, working together so as to follow a comprehensive, balanced, pragmatic and operational approach while respecting human rights and dignity of migrants and refugees.
- the management of migration between Europe and Africa must be carried out within the context of a partnership to combat poverty and promote sustainable development and co-development.
- for strengthening of an environment to occur, it is important to promote good governance, people-to-people exchange, trade and peace
- making better use of legal migration
- enhancing the capacity of countries of origin and transit and destination to manage migratory flows in their countries
- developing awareness programs
- facilitating the movement of workers and combating exclusion, xenophobia and racism
- implementing an active policy of integration for legal migrants and controlling borders
- fighting against illegal immigration, including re-admission of illegal migrants and trafficking in human beings
- the committee commits itself to encourage and deepen the political and operational dialogue between the European Union and Africa on migration and development by improving the political dialogue on a continental scale

"What is needed is a Marshall Plan for Africa," Mohammad Nabil Benabdallah, Morocco's Minister of Communication and spokesman for the Moroccan government told UPI. Benabdallah was referring to the post-World War II plan that helped much of war-devastated Europe get economically back on its feet.

Morocco is greatly affected as it finds itself caught up between the two sides; Morocco is both a "producer" of immigrants and a host country from where sub-Saharan Africans arrive here for the next step of the journey, and usually the most perilous.

Then there is always the danger of Islamist terrorists infiltrating the migrants, both to recruit them and as a cover allowing them access into Europe.

12 Jul 2006, <http://wpherald.com/articles/261/1/Analysis-Illegal-migrants-challenge-both-Africa-and-Europe/Security-measures-are-not-enough.html>

Europe, Africa seek to slow immigration

RABAT, Morocco, July 12 (UPI) -- European and African officials, meeting in Morocco, have agreed to a series of joint measures to stem the flow of illegal immigrants to Europe.

The plan includes 67 recommendations that combine tougher border security with incentives to tackle the poverty and violence that fuel the immigration, the EUobserver reported.

"Fortunately, for the first time, there is a consensus," European Union Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini said Tuesday. He stressed, though, immigration "will be the first challenge for Europe in the years to come."

The meeting marked the first time ministers from African and European countries jointly sought to tackle the problem of illegal immigrants, which has become a major issue in Europe.

More than 9,500 immigrants have landed in Spain's Canary Islands this year, which is double last year's total, the EUobserver said. More than 1,000 illegal immigrants have landed on the Mediterranean island nation of Malta -- an island with an overall population of only 400,000.

12 Jul 2006, <http://www.upi.com/NewsTrack/view.php?StoryID=20060712-035433-4636r>

Finnish FM says pleased with Rabat meeting

Erkki Tuomioja (soc dem), the foreign minister of Finland, the country holding the EU presidency, told the Finnish News Agency (STT) on Tuesday that he was pleased with the Euro-African ministerial conference on migration and development. The meeting was held in Rabat in Morocco on Monday and Tuesday.

The minister added that he sympathised with the representatives of human rights organisations who had criticised such meetings of focusing too much on policing and security issues.

"This is not only a border control and security question, though it is that too," Mr Tuomioja said.

"The whole is important here. One has specifically wanted to start from the premise that the immigration question is to be handled in an expansive manner."

Mr Tuomioja also underlined that development had been the other theme of the conference.

"It is also about the conditions from which people attempt to make the journey to Europe, sometimes taking quite desperate risks."

The Rabat meeting, he added, would lay a solid foundation for the preparations of the next EU-Africa summit meeting.

"We have had too long a break in cooperation between the EU and the AU [African Union]. The migration issue contributes to lending weight to this as well."

/STT/

12.7.2006 at 10:03, <http://newsroom.finland.fi/stt/showarticle.asp?intNWSAID=13122&group=Politics>

Rabat's migration conference

Action plan adopts carrot and stick approach

By Bachir Niah | Morocco TIMES

Rabat--- As declared before, the 60 countries participating in the Euro-African conference on Migration and Development endorsed on Tuesday the Rabat Declaration, ratifying the action plan which adopted the carrot and stick approach.

PICTURE: Participants agreed that the conference has shattered the belief that the security approach alone cannot solve the problem of illegal migration. Ph: AFP.

"The conference was a success. We have reached most of our objectives," declared the Minister Delegate to Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Taib Fassi Fihri, in a press conference after the closing session.

The action plan reflected, par excellence, "the spirit of Rabat", which everyone agrees has shattered the belief that the security approach alone cannot solve the problem of illegal migration.

"Europeans had believed in the security approach but now it seems that, through the Rabat Declaration and the concrete action plan, everyone agrees that security measures are just part of the solution," the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Mohamed Benaissa, told Morocco Times.

The first thing participating countries, mainly from the wealthy block, committed to do is to improve economic cooperation, promote trade and boost socio-economic development in Africa, in order to alleviate the impact of poverty and thereby dissuade scores of Africans from taking the road of death.

Late last year, a number of migrants, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, had died while storming the two Spanish enclaves, Ceuta and Melilla, by climbing their barbed-wire fences, in quest of a better lifestyle in the supposedly-EI Dorado EU countries, while many others were reported injured.

And recently, hundreds of sub-Saharan Africans have lost their lives on the dangerous sea voyages of more than 1,000 km from Mauritania or Senegal to the Canaries, and in the Gibraltar Straits.

The Europeans promised in the action plan to help legal migrants invest in their countries of origin, providing them with technical and financial assistance and mechanisms to co-finance their investment projects.

They also promised the development of knowledge and know-how and of measures aiming to guarantee that sufficient skills are available for the development of African countries. This is through developing partnerships between technical and scientific institutions and strengthening cooperation in terms of professional training.

One of the main lines of the action plan is the setting up of cooperation programmes for the management of legal migration, through adopting measures facilitating the circulation of workers and people, training migrants before they leave their country of origin, promoting access for legal migrants to education and training Mechanisms in the host country, and fighting discrimination.

On the security side, besides strengthening the national border control capacity of departure and transit countries, the plan promises the reinforcement of cooperation in the fight against illegal immigration, including returning migrants in transit countries and setting up efficient readmission systems between all concerned countries.

It also called for facilitating the re-integration of irregular migrants who have returned, launching awareness-raising campaigns, and providing financial support for transit and origin countries facing emergency situations.

To ensure the implementations of all these recommendations, the participating countries agreed to set up a follow-

up committee and called on NGOs to get involved in the process.

"There are a number of conceptions for which we need an implementation mechanism. That is why we have decided to establish a follow-up committee, which will meet in the coming weeks," underlined Mohamed Benaissa, stressing that Europeans have to live up to their commitments.

12 Jul 2006, 1:34 pm, <http://www.moroccotimes.com/paper/article.asp?idr=2&id=15896>

Africa Features

Analysis: Illicit migrant unites Africa-EU

By Claude Salhani

RABAT, Morocco (UPI) -- How do you stop millions of jobless, hungry, frightened war-wary Africans from trekking north across the Sahara Desert into Morocco and from there hopefully to Europe; braving along the way modern day traders in human lives, treacherous seas they navigate aboard un-seaworthy death traps and tens of thousands of security personnel deployed with the sole purpose of stopping them?

'Not through security measures alone,' replies Andre Obame, Gabon's Minister of the Interior, Security and Immigration while speaking to United Press International in the Moroccan capital, Rabat, at the close of a two-day international conference gathered here at the behest of the Moroccans who find themselves at both the receiving end of immigrants, and as an 'exporter of immigrants.'

Other senior officials, including Morocco's communication minister, Mohammad Nabil Benabdallah, agrees that all the security measures in the world will not prevent clandestine immigration. In fact, the final communiqué published by the closing session, Tuesday, makes it clear that new thinking is needed. Such novelty may be found in the buzzword of the two-day conference coined: 'the spirit of Rabat.'

'The European countries have understood that a poor Africa will produce immigrants. Thus the better way of fighting against illegal immigrants would be to fix them at home. And fixing them at home means to provide them with the means to develop themselves,' Obame told UPI.

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'What is needed is a Marshall Plan for Africa,' Mohammad Nabil Benabdallah, Morocco's Minister of Communication and spokesman for the Moroccan government told UPI. Benabdallah was referring to the post-World War II plan that helped much of war-devastated Europe get economically back on its feet.

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allowing them access into Europe.

(Comments may be sent to Claude@upi.com.) United Press International

12 Jul 2006, 16:50 GMT, http://news.monstersandcritics.com/africa/article_1180273.php/Analysis_Illicit_migrant_unites_Africa-EU

African Migration is the Focus on „Africa Journal“

Over the past few years, thousands of Africans have risked their lives in desperate attempts to reach Europe in search of work and a better life. This week, ministers from 57 European and African nations concluded a meeting in the Moroccan capital, Rabat, to discuss ways of dealing with migrants. Join us Thursday, 13 July, at 1800 UTC as guest host Mwamoyo Hamza and his guests discuss the African migration problem and the challenges facing African and European governments.

Africa Journal is broadcast on local television affiliates and via live streaming video on www.VOANews.com. Tune in each week as host Vincent Makori and his guests examine the critical issues and events shaping Africa's political, economic, and social landscape.

Viewers and journalists are welcome to join in the discussion and ask questions. Contact us at 1-202-401-4969 or africatv@voanews.com.

12 Jul 2006, <http://voanews.com/english/About/2006-07-12-aj-migration.cfm>

Migration summit glosses over EU-Africa differences

By Ingrid Melander and Tom Pfeiffer

RABAT (Reuters) - Micro-credits, academic exchanges, tax cuts for money transfers -- bright ideas abounded at a meeting of more than 50 countries' ministers in Morocco aimed at combating illegal migration and promoting development.

But as much as European and African ministers spoke of a new dynamism in their cooperation, the conference highlighted long-standing differences over responsibility for repatriating migrants and the level of EU help to Africa. Delegates tiptoed around the problems of corruption and mismanagement that have widened the north-south wealth gap and turned Europe into a magnet for young Africans desperate to escape poverty.

"There doesn't seem to be much of a change of tack by Europe, which is still obsessed with fighting illegal migration," said Mohamed Khachani, head of the Moroccan migration research group AMERM.

"We expected a frank and sincere dialogue that goes to the heart of the problem, but it seems that didn't happen."

He said little was done to relieve the immediate suffering of thousands of destitute Africans ready to brave treacherous seas in crowded motor launches and decrepit fishing boats for the chance of a new life in Europe.

Europe, keen to prove it is sympathetic, played up the benefits of legal migration and championed ideas like micro-credits for migrants to set up businesses back home, and centres of medical excellence to stop an exodus of African health workers.

A new observation unit will track migrant movements and states agreed to work together to crack down on human trafficking gangs, branded "21st century slave traders" by Senegalese Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio.

But there was little mention of the waste and corruption that has left swathes of Africa starved of infrastructure and meant economic growth and living standards have failed to keep pace with the rapidly growing population.

"Europe has a fundamental role to play when we talk about bad governance because these governments are often supported by the European Union," said Khachani.

Missed Opportunity

Analysts said the conference risked going down as a missed opportunity.

No major new development aid for Africa was announced, though the wealthy EU held out the prospect of giving Morocco up to 70 million euros to tackle illegal migration.

George Joffe, analyst at the Centre of International Studies in Cambridge, England, said part of the reason for the migrant crisis was that decades of development aid had failed to create enough jobs in Africa.

"The EU can't say anything on that as its own development policies are the same as those of the IMF and World Bank. So it can only treat migration as a security issue," he said.

Oumar Hamadou Dicko, Mali's minister for nationals living abroad, said Africa needed more than micro-credits.

"We need to find solutions to unemployment problems, especially for the young," he said. "We need a Marshall Plan for Africa, not help that comes drop by drop."

Signs of exasperation occasionally troubled the conference's carefully managed aura of diplomatic harmony.

Canary Islands President Adan Martin Menis said Senegal had still not committed itself to joining sea patrols to prevent illegal migrants setting off for the Spanish-owned islands.

African delegates said the EU would need to come up with more money if illegal migration was to be stamped out.

"We cannot use what little money we have for our development to be Europe's cops," said Nigerien Foreign

Minister Aichatou Mindaoudou.

Hatem Ben Salem, Tunisia's secretary of state for European affairs, complained about EU demands that his country take back non-Tunisian migrants who had travelled through Tunisia to reach Europe.

"You cannot ask the Maghreb countries to take responsibility for the problems of the European countries," he said.

12 Jul 2006 9:06 AM GMT10, <http://za.today.reuters.com/news>

Europe and Africa pledge to respect rights of migrants and refugees

Source: UNHCR

GENEVA, July 12 (UNHCR) - More than 50 European and African countries attending the Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development have agreed to work together to manage migratory flows and pledged to respect the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees.

In a final declaration signed in the Moroccan capital Rabat on Tuesday, ministers from 57 countries agreed to form a close partnership to try and manage the wave of irregular immigration from sub-Saharan Africa into Europe "in an optimum fashion and in a spirit of shared responsibility."

The Europeans and Africans committed themselves "to work together, following a comprehensive, balanced, pragmatic and operational approach, and respecting the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees, as regards the phenomenon of migratory routes that affect our peoples."

The Rabat declaration also recognised "the need to provide adequate international protection in accordance with the international obligations of the partner countries." It invited international organizations, including UNHCR, to help implement the different actions agreed upon. Sweden announced at the conference that it would provide funding for a 10-point UNHCR action plan.

The final statement also said the partnership was founded on the conviction that managing migration between the two continents must include fighting poverty and promoting development.

Addressing the conference on Monday, UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres had unveiled the agency's 10-point action plan setting out key areas where comprehensive action was needed to address mixed and irregular migratory movements while protecting the rights of refugees and migrants.

"Our plan of action shows how the mandate, competencies and resources of my office might be used to assist states in their efforts to address this issue in an effective and equitable manner," Guterres said.

The plan calls for judicial and police cooperation against human trafficking and the crime networks that operate irregular immigration routes. Navy, air and land forces would also cooperate in identifying the routes used by migrants.

The conference was called amid a surge in the number of Africans arriving in countries such as Italy and Spain, often crossing the high seas in rickety and rusty vessels. Signatories of the Rabat declaration will meet again within the next four years to review progress in the plan.

Refugees and asylum seekers account for a relatively small proportion of the estimated 200 million people on the move in the world today. In many cases, however, refugees travel alongside migrants as part of mixed migratory movements.

More often than not such movements are irregular, in the sense that they take place without the requisite documentation and frequently involve human smugglers and traffickers.

Background: Myanmar displacement, http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/MY_DIS.htm?v=at_a_glance

12 Jul 2006 15:26:37 GMT, Reuters AlertNet, <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/UNHCR/65dea0463016e693342f91ae039a5434.htm>

African corruption drives illegal immigration, say Europeans

The Associated Press (apwire)

Delegates from 58 European and African countries adopted a road map for curbing illegal immigration by tackling the chronic African poverty that fuels it.

Yet the plan was conspicuously silent on corruption in Africa, an issue that one European delegate said was an elephant in the conference room. Few European diplomats are ever willing to bring it up in public out of courtesy for African colleagues, Belgian Cooperation Minister Armand de Decker said.

Delegates at the two-day conference, which ended Tuesday, were seeking ways to develop Africa's economies and improve the quality of life there, making Europe less of a temptation.

The new Europe-Africa plan adopted in Rabat spelled out a wish list of proposals on how countries can work together to target aid money and promote growth in Africa. Many _ from academic exchanges to simple cash handouts _ involve government oversight.

Decker said Africans' biggest problem was "bad African governance," leading to the misuse--or plain theft--of aid money.

Addressing delegates in closed sessions, Decker said that African governments could best help end illegal immigration abroad with "good governance, exemplary management and combatting corruption" at home.

"Good governance must become the obsession of African peoples," he told The Associated Press, saying that a "revolution" in African societies was needed.

Decker said European diplomats regularly press African governments to clean up their acts, "but if we do it in public they get offended." Erkki Tuomioja, foreign minister of Finland, which currently holds the European Union's rotating presidency, said: "We do want (African governments) to work better, and we're willing to work with them." On Tuesday the European Commission proposed a euro3 billion (US\$3.8 billion) fund to promote good governance in Africa, as part of efforts to fight global poverty at the upcoming Group of Eight summit of major economic powers.

The European Union's executive office said the new fund for Africa would be used to encourage reform and should be distributed to those countries taking steps to improve governance in addition to regular aid.

In the road map adopted in Rabat, one proposal is to increase cooperative projects between European and African countries in areas such as farming, crafts, fishing and tourism. Another is to make it easier for legal immigrants to Europe to send money back home to Africa, stimulating the local economy.

Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio said the road map was full of "concrete measures." "The important thing for us (Africans) is to deal with (illegal immigration) in a global way," he said.

European heavy-hitters at the conference pitched ideas that largely sidestepped African governments.

France, a major destination for migrants, dangled the idea of micro-credits to encourage citizens of Africa to stay home and develop an entrepreneurial spirit.

"To have US\$1,000 to start up a store or company is to pass from the shadows to the light," French Foreign Minister Douste-Blazy said.

The Belgian cooperation minister said he would like Africans in Belgium to set aside 10 percent of the money they send home for development projects for their hometowns.

"It could be a hospital, a school or simply electricity," he said. "Communal projects, but ones that interest (migrants') families," he said.

In the past, European countries have tended to see fighting illegal immigration as a matter of policing coastlines and stepping up border checks. But a recent surge in immigration despite heightened security has caused a shift in thinking.

The migrants' swelling numbers, as well as the death rates in their dangerous crossings of the Mediterranean _ estimated at 40 percent by EU officials _ are "examples of the consequences of a failing European policy," European Parliament member Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert said last week.

By JOHN THORNE, RABAT, Morocco

2006-07-12 09:53 (KST), http://english.ohmynews.com/ArticleView/article_view.asp?no=304688&rel_no=1

Euro-Africa conference adopts partnership on migration

Rabat, Morocco, 07/12 - The Euro-Africa ministerial conference on migration and development ended Tuesday in Rabat after adopting a final declaration and a plan of action advocating a partnership for an optimal management of migratory flows in a spirit of shared responsibility.

Participants at the two-day meeting hailed the "Rabat spirit" which triggered the "beginning of a process and collective awareness of a shared problem".

Moroccan foreign affairs and cooperation minister, Mohamed Bena

"By highlighting this process that has just been initiated in Rabat, it's a question of confirming our decisions in a significant and concrete way to remedy the dysfunction that we have been able to identify by bringing us together and by dialoguing in a concerted way," he said.

The Spanish minister of foreign affairs, Miguel Angel Moratinos, said in the face of "difficult situations, there is need henceforth to refer to the Rabat spirit" which prevailed all along this conference.

Hailing the Euro-African initiative, Niger's minister of foreign affairs, Mrs A

on behalf of all participants, Senegalese interior and local communities minister, Ousmane Ngom thanked Morocco for the organisation of this "successful" conference which inaugurates the beginning of a process.

Minister Ngom commended Morocco's approach and its commitment to the treatment of the migration issue.

The French minister of state in charge of European affairs, Mrs Catherine Colonna, insisted on the shared co-responsibility", emphasised that all countries, be they African or European, are committed to the same process regarding the issue of migration.

At least 60 African and European countries and several representatives of international and regional organisations participated in the conference meant to determine appropriate means to better tackle and manage migratory flows, using a comprehensive partnership based on shared responsibility.

12 Jul 2006, <http://www.angolapress-angop.ao/noticia-e.asp?ID=455221>

FAO chief hails Euro-African migration conference

Rabat, Morocco, 07/12 - Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Director General, Jacques Diouf, has hailed as an "important initiative," the ongoing Euro-African ministerial conference on migration and development.

"The influx of immigrants of the last few years between Africa and Europe have major implications on food production, food security and environment...", Diouf told the conference here Monday. He stressed the need to place the migration issue in a global historical perspective so as to find lasting solutions to the problem.

"The recent attempts by immigrants who leave the African coasts for Spain and Italy, are a reminder of the European migration in the last two centuries. They are the consequences of difficult conditions of many young Africans," Diouf noted.

"Africa is the only region of the world where food production per capital has been constantly decreasing despite the fact that agriculture represents 17 percent of the gross national product (GNP), 57 percent of employment and 11 percent of exports," the FAO chief added.

But he said the increase in the number of small development projects in Africa would help generate and guarantee well paid jobs for thousands of young people, and provide a credible alternative to emigration.

12 Jul 2006, <http://www.angolapress-angop.ao/noticia-e.asp?ID=455216>

Europe, Africa "plan" to curb illegal immigration

RABAT: European and African ministers agreed yesterday to a "close partnership" to curb the influx of illegal immigrants to Europe, but remained vague on questions of implementation and financing.

Ministers from 57 countries closed their Euro-African conference in Rabat with the adoption of an action plan, including some 62 recommendations dealing with security and development, as well as a political statement.

"We have agreed to create and develop a close partnership between our respective countries to work together ... with respect for the fundamental rights and dignity of migrants and refugees, on the issue of the migration movements of our peoples," the conference's final declaration said.

The partnership is founded "on the strong conviction that managing the migration between Africa and Europe" must include alleviating poverty and promoting development, the declaration added.

The conference, triggered by a surge in clandestine immigration to ports in Italian and Spanish shores by Africans - often aboard unseaworthy boats in dangerous seas - marks the first time that Europe and Africa have tried to forge a common response to what has become a politically explosive issue on both continents.

Representatives from the countries that have signed on to the immigration plan will meet to evaluate its effectiveness, and a second ministerial conference will be held within four years.

The plan calls for measures to repatriate would-be immigrants, as well as for judicial and police co-operation against human trafficking and the crime networks that operate illegal immigration routes. Navy, air and land forces would also co-operate in identifying the illegal transit of migrants.

The security initiatives are counterbalanced by unspecified plans by European nations to contribute to the development of African countries that would-be immigrants leave behind in search of a better life in Europe.

The action plan identifies areas of co-operation in certain industries such as agriculture, tourism and fishing. It also looks to provide financial incentives to Africans residing legally in Europe to take part in the co-development of their countries of origin.

Regarding concerns that controlled immigration could lead to a "brain drain" of educated Africans, the plan proposes an incentive for African students to return home.

But how the new partnership expects to finance the plans is not spelled out.

The conference has drawn criticism from some Moroccan non-governmental organisations (NGOs), who staged a protest outside the parliament in Rabat on Monday against what they called a security-minded approach and the "hypocrisy" of appeals to boost the development of sub-Saharan countries. - AFP

12 July, 2006, 11:42 AM Doha Time,

http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=96867&version=1&template_id=39&parent_id=21

Moroccan Press

Rabat Conference created 'deep solidarity reflection' on migration

The Moroccan press deemed that the Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development, held on July 10-11 in Rabat, creates a "deep solidarity reflection" on illegal migration.

The Moroccan daily Aujourd'hui Le Maroc said, in this respect, that massive illegal migration is "a shock and traumatism for Africa," adding that a common policy should be elaborated to stop the migratory flows, which will

alleviate the human tragedies.

Under the title "Development vs Immigration," the Moroccan daily Maroc Soir underlined that it is the first time that origin, transit and destination countries sit around the same table under the banner of economic and social development.

By hosting the two-day conference, wrote L'Opinion, Morocco "is distinguished as the torch-bearer of peace, brotherhood and peaceful co-existence between civilizations and the messenger of dialogue to fight intolerance and the sources of fanaticism."

In another article, the same daily noted that Algeria's boycott of this conference "reflects anew the ill will of our neighbours and their refusal to dialogue at a moment when a genuine road map should be adopted (Rabat Declaration) to manage the migratory flows," recalling that thousands of sub-Saharan illegals continue to cross the Algerian borders heading for Morocco.

"The fact that Europeans and Africans have decided to meet in Morocco to tackle the future of the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, in terms of illegal immigration, means that there is an awareness-raising in the two camps" and that the two parties have decided to "sit around a table to discuss together as responsible partners united by the same destiny," added the paper.

Another Moroccan daily Al MounaĀġtaf underlined that the economic approach to the migration phenomenon constitutes an efficient solution, noting that only contribution to the development of countries, through a new Marshall Plan, would guarantee a fresh economic takeoff in these countries or a road map that would help these countries overcome under-development, poverty, famine and unemployment.

The daily Al Haraka, stressed the need for a comprehensive approach based on coordination and complementarity.
MAP

7/11/2006 | 3:39 pm, <http://www.moroccotimes.com/News/article.asp?id=15892>

Migration

Holding conference in Rabat proves Moroccan efforts concerning illegal migration, official

"Holding the Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development in Rabat constitutes recognition of the important role Morocco plays in dealing with the phenomenon of illegal migration," said Khalid Zerouali, director of the Migration and Territory Surveillance Directorate (MTSD).

PICTURE: Khalid Zerouali, director of the Migration and Territory Surveillance Directorate (MTSD). Ph. Archives.

In an interview with the Moroccan daily Le Matin, Zerouali said that this conference will be an occasion for participating countries to exchange experiences in dealing with the phenomenon of illegal migration and to set up a set of concrete measures to be taken in the future concerning the issue.

Stressing that the challenges implied in the illegal migration phenomenon is faced by all concerned countries, the official underlined that the countries of origin, transit, and target countries should all share the responsibility of dealing with the issue.

"Transit countries should have intelligence and security means to control their borders; countries of origin should be supported to allow the settlement of their populations; and target countries should take measures to "facilitate" the migrants' integration and protect the rights of the migrants already living on their soil," Zerouali said.

The Moroccan official added that sharing responsibility is inevitable because all concerned countries will benefit from the positive outcomes if the problem is dealt with appropriately, and will be harmed in the opposite case.

Concerning the Moroccan strategy in relation with illegal migration, Zerouali precised that Morocco is dealing with the issue at five main levels. The first is legislative, with the enforcement of laws punishing human traffickers and saving the migrants' human rights; the second is institutional, mainly with the setting up of the MTSD.

The third level is security-based, and concerns border surveillance, operations conducted to abort illegal migration attempts and to dismantle human traffic networks; the fourth is based on communication and awareness campaigns; and the fifth is international cooperation in the domain.

The Ministerial Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development is being held in Rabat on July 10-11 with the participation of ministers representing 57 countries.

By Kaoutar Tbatou, Morocco TIMES, 7/11/2006 | 4:14 pm, <http://www.moroccotimes.com/Paper/article.asp?idr=2&id=15880>

Europe, Africa Agree to Slow Illegal Immigration

By Lisa Bryant, Paris

European and African officials have agreed to a series of joint measures to stem the flow of illegal immigration to Europe during an unprecedented, two-day meeting Morocco. Plan mixes tougher security with incentives to stem to

the exodus from Africa.

The action plan agreed to by ministers meeting in Rabat includes 67 recommendations on ways to prevent illegal immigrants from entering European soil, and incentives to keep Africans from emigrating in the first place.

The meeting of ministers from more than 50 African and European countries represents the first time they are jointly tackling the problem of illegal immigration, which has become a major issue in Europe.

The officials agreed to re-inforce their judicial and police cooperation, and create African data bases to fight against illegal immigration. They also called for launching publicity campaigns to warn would-be immigrants about the risks of illegal immigration - such as the possibility of drowning at sea, which has been the fate of a number of Africans bound for Europe.

The ministers also called for stepped-up European development assistance for Africa - particularly creating employment in zones of high emigration. The plan is short on specifics, including financing.

It does, however, call for the African diaspora living legally in Europe to help improve conditions for their fellow countrymen at home. It also foresees offering incentives for Africans studying in Europe to return to their home countries.

PICTURE: French Interior Minister Nicholas Sarkozy

Countries across Europe are cracking down on soaring illegal immigration from Africa, and elsewhere. But French Interior Minister Nicholas Sarkozy, who attended the Rabat conference, said European governments rejected the idea of zero immigration or of a so-called "fortress Europe".

But in remarks on France radio, Sarkozy said neither France nor Europe would accept what he called the extremist discourse of those who supported immigration without limits. We cannot receive all those who see an El Dorado in France or in Europe, he said.

Sarkozy is promoting what is called a chosen-immigration program for France, hoping to lure only the best and the brightest. But such programs alarm many African governments, who fear a brain drain of talent they need at home.

11 July 2006, <http://www.voanews.com/english/2006-07-11-voa73.cfm>

Africans, Europeans Release Migration Plan

By JOHN THORNE Associated Press Writer

RABAT, Morocco — Delegates from 58 countries promised Tuesday to combine tougher immigration enforcement with more aid for Africans to help stem a rising tide of illegal migration to Europe.

The plan released by African and European delegates at the end of a two-day meeting on immigration includes proposals for short-term work visas, grants to migrants in Europe to start businesses back home and funding for job creation in regions with high emigration.

It proposes international cooperation on enforcement of immigration laws, along with making it easier for legal migrants to Europe to send money home to Africa, stimulating the local economy.

The plan is non-binding, vague on funding and it wasn't clear how much of the plan would ever be enacted — weaknesses that prompted European Union Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner France Frattini to call for a task force to monitor whether countries follow through.

And the plan is conspicuously silent on corruption in Africa.

Belgian Cooperation Minister Armand de Decker said in an interview that Africa's biggest problem is "bad African governance" leading to the misuse or theft of aid money. Many measures listed in the action plan — from academic exchanges to simple cash handouts — involve government oversight.

"Good governance must become the obsession of Africans," he said.

Decker said European diplomats regularly press African governments to clean up their acts, "but if we do it in public they get offended."

EU officials say migrants have been undaunted by the risks of crossing or by tightened border controls in Europe.

Officials cited examples earlier in the meeting, saying more than 10,000 people have arrived in Spain's Canary Islands off the northwest coast of Africa since the beginning of 2006 — already more than twice as many as in 2005.

In an apparent sign of concern over the problem, some European delegates proposed projects that largely sidestepped African governments.

France, a major destination for migrants, dangled the idea of small loans to encourage Africans to stay home and start businesses.

The migrants' swelling numbers, as well as the high death rate for crossings to Europe, prompted the search for solutions broader than just tough enforcement.

Separately, in Brussels, Belgium, the European Commission proposed a \$3.8 billion fund to promote good governance in Africa, as part of efforts to find solutions to global poverty at the upcoming Group of Eight summit of major economic powers.

The European Union's executive office said the new fund for Africa should be used to encourage reform and should

be distributed in addition to regular aid to those countries taking steps to improve governance.

July 11, 2006, 6:34PM, <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/world/4040487.html>

Swiss back new plan to stem migration

Switzerland's top aid official says new international guidelines for tackling illegal migration from Africa to Europe are "an important first step".

Speaking at the end of a two-day conference in Morocco, Walter Fust said closer cooperation among countries was now needed to ensure that the root causes of migration were addressed in a meaningful way.

Fust, who is head of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), joined ministers and senior officials from almost 60 European and African countries in the Moroccan capital Rabat to discuss migration and development issues.

The conference ended on Tuesday with participants adopting a detailed programme of action, consisting of 62 recommendations, to monitor migration, crack down on human trafficking and make aid to Africa more effective.

"Everyone is aware that time is running out and illegal immigration cannot be dealt with simply with money, but with legislation, political will, mutual understanding and prospects for young people," said Fust.

The conference was called by Morocco and Spain in the wake of last autumn's mass crossings by sub-Saharan migrants into Ceuta and Melilla, Spanish enclaves on Morocco's northern coast.

This year has seen a big increase in the number of migrants landing on the Canary Islands, which lie off the southern Moroccan coast.

Around 10,000 African migrants have landed there so far this year – more than double the figure for the whole of last year, according to the Geneva-based International Organization for Migration. European Union officials say an estimated 40 per cent of those trying to cross the Mediterranean die in the process.

Job creation

Fust said the Swiss had called for "development aid to be much more oriented towards job creation", as well as appealing for the human rights of migrants to be respected. He added that differences remained on both sides of the Mediterranean on a framework for allowing African migrants to work legally in Europe.

Fust also warned that the issue was not limited to West Africa, and that Africa as a whole needed to wake up to the problem and come up with answers. "This debate needs to be heard at the heart of the African Union, because migratory flows will soon affect the east of the continent," he said.

On Monday the European Union announced it was sending \$3.2 million (SFr3.9 million) to help Mauritania patrol its borders and help pay for the repatriation of migrants from elsewhere in Africa caught crossing the North African nation.

The EU has identified Senegal and Mali as the top countries of origin, saying migrants mostly use the coastal nations of Mauritania and Morocco to get to Europe.

Fust told swissinfo that any additional money from Switzerland was unlikely since its development aid budget for Africa was fixed for this year and that any increase could only come at the expense of SDC operations elsewhere.

The Rabat conference is expected to be followed by another before the end of the year involving the EU and the African Union and focusing on other migrant routes further east.

swissinfo, Adam Beaumont with agencies

11. July 2006, Swissinfo, <http://www.nzz.ch/2006/07/11/eng/article6887644.html>

Countries agree migration plans

Illegal migrants are intercepted in Spain's Canary Islands

PICTURE: Thousands survive the perilous journey, but many perish

European and African countries have agreed a plan to tackle illegal immigration, at a specially-convened meeting in the Moroccan capital, Rabat.

The proposals include joint monitoring of sea and border routes, and tackling poverty through aid.

But human rights groups say they fear the focus will be on cracking down on illegal immigration rather than alleviating poverty.

Some 10,000 migrants have arrived in Spain's Canary Islands this year alone.

PICTURE: Click to see map of main routes into Europe

Officials from 57 countries attended the conference, which was triggered by the growing number of African migrants attempting to reach Europe.

Co-ordinated approach

"We have agreed to create and develop a close partnership between our respective countries to work together... with respect for the fundamental rights and dignity of migrants and refugees," the delegates said in a final declaration.

Other plans include

- * a migration observatory to track people's movements
- * measures to increase awareness of the dangers of illegal migration
- * financial, aid and employment incentives

Countries will also attempt to jointly target human trafficking networks through co-ordinated police and judicial efforts.

The conference said the repatriation of illegal migrants would also be made easier, with clearer rules on how they should be treated to preserve their dignity.

'Hundreds' killed

The number of illegal migrants reaching Spain's Canary Islands this year is already double the total for 2005.

Hundreds have also landed on Malta and the Italian island of Lampedusa.

Most of the migrants are from West and Central Africa - Mali, Senegal, Ivory Coast and DR Congo.

While thousands manage to reach European territory, many are killed after trying to make the journey in overcrowded and unsafe boats.

The BBC's Alix Kroeger in Rabat says it is impossible to know how many have died in the attempt, but they are likely to number in the hundreds.

PICTURE: Key Migrant Routes from Africa to Europe

11 July 2006, 16:47 GMT 17:47 UK, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5169736.stm>

Migrants' scant hopes for summit

By Alix Kroeger, BBC News, Rabat

PICTURE: (Two would-be illegal immigrants after arriving in an open wooden fishing boat in Tenerife) Thousands of Africans are risking their lives to reach Europe

In a church basement in Rabat, about 60 migrants from across sub-Saharan Africa are watching the World Cup final, a match between two European sides.

Most of the migrants are supporting France, a dissident few are cheering for Italy.

For most of them, this is as close to Europe as they will ever get.

Pastor Willy Bayanga watches from the back of the room.

Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, he has been in Morocco for two-and-a-half years.

He spent several weeks living in the forests around Ceuta, one of the Spanish enclaves in North Africa.

PICTURE: (Immigrants intercepted near Tenerife) Some 7,400 migrants have landed in the Canary Islands this year

He succeeded in breaching the security fence but was caught by border guards and thrown out. Now he lives in one of the poor quarters of Rabat, helping other migrants.

"They have no money," he says. "They have nothing.

"They can't go home - they just stay here and continue to suffer. Some of them are dying. Others are going mad from despair."

He has little hope of any progress coming from the European-African conference in Rabat.

Dangerous journey

Most of the migrants are from West and Central Africa - Mali, Senegal, Ivory Coast and DR Congo - but the International Organisation for Migration says some now come from as far away as South Asia.

PICTURE: View a map of migrant routes from Africa

They fly into Mauritania before crossing into Morocco by land, trekking inland to avoid Western Sahara and the landmines left by decades of conflict.

Then comes the most hazardous stage of the journey, the sea crossing.

Already this year, more than 7,500 migrants have reached the Canary Islands.

It is impossible to know how many have died in the attempt, but they are likely to number in the hundreds.

Some get to Morocco and find themselves stuck, unable to go on to Europe and unable to go home.

They run out of money, but to go home is to accept a humiliating loss of face. There may also be debts to pay.

"The naivety of people who have nothing to lose by leaving behind massive poverty is taken advantage of by organised crime," says Antonio Maria Costa, head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

"It offers, for a significant amount of money - perhaps the savings of an entire village - a passage in conditions which are not likely to deliver the poor victims to the destination."

Expelled

Like Pastor Willy, Celestine is from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

She casts a surreptitious glance around for police before leading me up the flight of stairs to the single room she shares with her three daughters and 16 other migrants.

PICTURE: (French interior minister, Nicolas Sarkozy) Mr Sarkozy called for "selective immigration"

For now, Celestine and her daughters have the room to themselves.

The men go out at first light to search for food and only return under cover of darkness.

If they're seen, they'll be reported to the police and expelled.

For now, Celestine, as the mother of three teenagers, is permitted to stay.

"I've also been expelled myself, several times, along with my daughters," Celestine says, as the World Cup final flickers in the background.

"They've been raped repeatedly during the expulsions, and so have I," she said.

"[The Moroccan authorities] are always trying to kick us out because we don't have proper papers."

BOX: We, the Europeans, have been giving so much - now the Africans have to show they have a great responsibility

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, EU External Relations Commissioner

After the murder of her husband, Celestine and her three girls fled across Africa.

She rattles off the stages of their journey - Congo-Brazzaville, Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, Algeria, and finally Morocco.

Celestine takes off her headscarf to show how her hair has gone prematurely grey.

She worries about what the future will hold for her daughters.

They are not allowed to go to school and she's not allowed to work.

New tragedy

It is only a few minutes drive from the poor quarters of Rabat, where Celestine and hundreds more like her live, to the walled complex of the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where the conference on migration is taking place.

It is a different world, and a different language.

There, the talk is of capacity-building, technical assistance and mutual co-operation.

The Africans want more emphasis on development.

PICTURE: (Fence between Spanish enclave Ceuta and Morocco) The EU is planning a rapid reaction force to enforce border security

The Senegalese Foreign Minister, Cheikh Tidiane Gadio, says the modern outflow of migrants brings back painful memories of the slave trade.

He calls it "a new tragedy of deportation of African youth".

The French Interior Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy, says the idea of "zero immigration" is a "dangerous myth". But so, he says, is the idea of open immigration.

"You don't want to lose your elites and your youth," he tells the African delegates, "and we can't accept them all."

He argues instead for a policy of "selective immigration" - choosing the most desirable migrants to fill gaps in the labour market.

But he says France remains open to African immigration, and points out that it grants two-thirds of its residence permits to migrants without qualifications.

Occasionally, at the conference, the underlying tensions bubble up.

When Mr Sarkozy begins to speak, Moroccan officials come in to the press room and pull the plug on the video link so that no-one can hear what he is saying.

Only after several minutes of protests from journalists and a French diplomat is the sound eventually restored.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, says a mechanism for legal migration is essential. It is a question of markets, he says, and Europe needs more workers.

"Either they come legally, in an organised way, or they come illegally and they will come anyway, and there is no border policy that can avoid that."

'Eldorado'

The European Union is already increasing boat patrols along the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts, in response to the growing number of boatloads of migrants washing up on the Canaries, Malta and the Italian island of Lampedusa.

Later this month, it will launch a new rapid reaction team with a remit to react to sudden crises in migration, such as the hundreds of migrants who tried to breach the fences around Ceuta and Melilla, the Spanish enclaves in North Africa, last year.

The team will reinforce border security, but will also offer assistance to stranded migrants.

"To see this linkage, between poverty, insecurity and the prospects we have to create - and the African countries are the first responsible, for their own citizens and young people - that is exactly the major element," says the EU's

External Relations Commissioner, Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

"We, the Europeans, are the ones who really have been giving so much. Now I think the Africans also have to show that they have a great responsibility."

In the evening skies over the Rabat seafront, the swifts wheel and dive.

Morocco is on one of the great migratory routes, for birds and, increasingly, for people.

Europe is over the horizon, beyond the waves - Eldorado, they call it here.

Until Africans have the hope of a viable future in their own countries, they will continue risking their lives on the dangerous crossing to Europe.

11 July 2006, 15:12 GMT 16:12 UK, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5168682.stm>

Africa Features

Analysis: Morocco, the last frontier

By Claude Salhani

RABAT, Morocco (UPI) -- For millions of would-be African immigrants, Morocco represents the last frontier, or the first serious hurdle between Africa and Europe, between prosperity and despair, life and death.

Tens of thousands of sub-Saharan Africans risk their lives everyday in efforts to first reach Morocco and from here, to their promised land --Europe -- hoping to escape poverty, wars, unemployment, disease and other ills that continue to plague many of the countries south of Morocco.

Hundreds, if not thousands of immigrants are picked up daily by coast guards and other security forces in Spain, Italy, France, Morocco and other countries along the Mediterranean basin, as they try to make their way to Europe -- and they believe, a better life for themselves and their families. Many, regretfully, die along the way, usually by drowning in the freezing waters of the Atlantic Ocean, or caught in sudden storms on the Mediterranean Sea.

The problem has swollen to such alarming proportions that simple policing of borders no longer offers a viable solution. 'What is needed is a Marshall Plan for Africa,' Mohammad Nabil Benabdallah, Morocco's Minister of Communication and spokesman for the Moroccan government told United Press International, Monday, on the first day of an international conference convened in the Moroccan capital of Rabat aimed at addressing these very issues. Benabdallah was referring to the post-World War II plan that helped much of war-devastated Europe get economically back on its feet.

Morocco came to realize that this problem of mass immigration was one that transcended its own borders, Benabdallah told UPI, and concerned not only the countries where the would-be illegals try to reach -- typically France, Spain and other parts of Europe, but also affected the countries from where the migrants originated. Often, these countries end up losing not just a menial work force, but in many instances, particularly in times of war and civil strife, it's the loss of the country's well-educated, or brain drain, that ends up hurting the most.

Morocco is greatly affected as it finds itself caught up between the two sides; Morocco is both a 'producer' of immigrants and a host country from where sub-Saharan Africans arrive and depart on the next step of the journey, and usually the most perilous.

Tens of thousands of immigrants trek their way across the Sahara Desert and then prepare themselves to cross a swath of the Atlantic Ocean to reach the Spanish islands of the Canaries, off the coast of West Africa. They do this aboard rickety canoes or rafts, and many perish in the seas. Others try to scale the six-meter fence separating Melilla and Ceuta, two Spanish enclaves at the northern end of Morocco, hoping that when they land on the other side of the fence it would put them in Europe, and a step closer to continental Europe. Some die when they fall off the fence.

In 2005 alone, the Moroccan minister points out there have been 29,800 attempted clandestine immigrant crossings aborted, of which 21,894 were from sub-Saharan Africa. 'They come from everywhere,' says Benabdallah. 'They come from Senegal, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Kenya, etc. They are helped along the way by criminal networks that have people helping them in all countries along the way.'

While the number of Moroccan would-be illegal immigrants has dropped by 15.38 percent, said Benabdallah, when compared to the previous year, the number of illegal networks facilitating the migrants' illegal passage -- usually in exchange for hefty sums of money -- has grown; 484 networks were caught and dismantled in 2005, an increase of 15 percent over the previous year.

Morocco hopes the conference will yield concrete results in the form of massive help to the countries 'producing' immigrants, giving them incentives to remain in their home countries, specifically, jobs.

The problem is further amplified by terrorist groups, such as al-Qaida, who make use of the waves of immigration moving into Europe from sub-Saharan Africa to move people into Europe.

During the first semester of this year Moroccan authorities have foiled 6,824 attempted clandestine immigration crossings, of which 4,200 originated from sub-Saharan Africa. One hundred and sixty networks were dismantled. Morocco's efforts in combating illegal immigration, along with that of Malawi, were 'recognized in their dynamism in combating clandestine migration' in the 2006 U.S. State Department report citing them as the only Arab and African countries struggling with greater efficiency against the phenomenon of irregular migration.

Besides re-organizing its border protection and immigration services to better deal with the issues at hand,

Morocco has fielded 11,000 security agents to monitor their borders, of which 4,500 have been allocated to monitor the coast.

But just as the United States has learned that no wall, fence, ditch, moat or security forces can prevent immigrants escaping hunger, political and social oppression, so to are the Moroccans and their European neighbors coming to the same realization. The only way to hold back the hordes of would-be migrants is to offer them incentives to stay where they are in the first place. Europe has to start thinking about job creation not only in the 25-member European Union, but in the impoverished sub-Saharan, too. Nothing else will ebb the unstoppable tide of immigration.

(Comments may be sent to Claude@upi.com.) United Press International

Jul 11, 2006, 15:22 GMT, http://news.monstersandcritics.com/africa/article_1179929.php/Analysis_Morocco_the_last_frontier

Europe, Africa back plan against illegal migration

By Lamine Ghanmi

RABAT (Reuters) - European and African ministers hailed a new era of cooperation in fighting illegal migration on Tuesday and agreed a joint plan to monitor migration, crack down on human trafficking and make aid to Africa more effective.

"We have a plan and the means exist to implement it," said France's European Affairs Minister, Catherine Colonna, at the end of a meeting of over 50 countries in the Moroccan capital.

"We leave Rabat with a common approach, and that in itself is good as the problems are complex."

The ministers adopted the draft plan in full at the end of a two-day gathering called to seek solutions to a growing humanitarian crisis.

Human rights groups had organised their own alternative migration conference in Morocco earlier this month, saying they feared Europe would focus mostly on the anti-migrant crackdown while paying only lip service to the need for aid.

More than 9,500 migrants have arrived in Spain's Canary Islands so far this year, double last year's total, but scores have washed up dead on beaches after their small, overcrowded boats capsized in the Atlantic waves.

Only last week, three African migrants died trying to storm the heavily guarded Spanish enclave of Melilla in North Africa.

"It is important to undertake swift and concrete actions in order to respond to this urgent situation," the draft plan said.

The Rabat document proposed more coordination for patrolling borders and sea routes, a Euro-African migration observatory to track people's movements and measures to increase awareness of the dangers of illegal migration, especially among young people in the poorest parts of Africa.

Countries will try to smooth procedures for repatriating illegal migrants and clarify rules on how they are treated to preserve their dignity.

The plan puts a new emphasis on the positive side of migration by promoting incentives to get more Africans into universities on both continents, set up a Euro-African business forum and help migrants returning home to start businesses.

Regional integration and cooperation will be given new momentum, bringing together municipalities and businesses on each continent to stimulate Africa's economic growth and fight poverty.

Colonna said the Rabat gathering would be followed by another before the end of the year involving the EU and the African Union and focusing on other migrant routes further east.

That meeting is likely to include Algeria, which has strained relations with Morocco over the disputed territory of Western Sahara and did not attend the Rabat meeting.

Jul 11, 2006 3:38 PM GMT13, <http://za.today.reuters.com/news>

Africa

Europe, Africans search for ways to stem migration

Ingrid Melander and Tom Pfeiffer | Rabat, Morocco

European and African ministers said on Monday that the waves of illegal migrants seeking a better life in Europe would never be stopped until Europe helps Africa fight poverty.

The ministers, meeting in Rabat to reach a plan on migration, were from 50 nations -- grouping for the first time countries where migrants start out from, transit countries and the destinations.

They said legal migration should be encouraged in order to channel money and skills back to Africa, the world's poorest continent.

Thousands of African youths make treacherous journeys every year, trying to reach Europe for work. Many die in

the attempt, often drowning in rickety boats.

"Let us offer Africa's youth a future of dignity. Then it will not risk resorting to violence and extremism, or choosing, en masse, the paths of exile," French President Jacques Chirac said in a letter read in his behalf at the conference. At least three Africans died last week when up to 70 people stormed a razor-wire fence separating Morocco from the Spanish enclave of Melilla.

Eleven died last year as hundreds of sub-Saharan Africans scaled the fences of Melilla and sister enclave Ceuta, prompting Madrid and Morocco to scramble for the diplomatic drive to bring together Africa and Europe to come up with a plan.

"We are uniting will, ideas and criteria," Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos told the two-day conference. "We are at a decisive moment. We have the shared responsibility to build a migratory model."

Senegalese Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio said the systematic refusal of visas by European countries encouraged migrants to seek desperate solutions to their plight.

His Moroccan counterpart, Mohamed Benaissa, warned against the consequences of cracking down on illegal migrants and tightening security at southern Europe's flank without addressing the underlying causes of migration.

"You can't limit the problem of immigration to a security approach. Societies that are comfortable cannot abandon poor societies," he said.

"Morocco is ready to collaborate with its African brothers and to overcome these difficulties."

Linked fates

Africa's population is rising sharply and economic growth has not kept pace. In 2001, around 46% of sub-Saharan Africa's people lived on less than \$1 a day.

French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy told Moroccan newspaper Le Matin that managing migration between Africa and Europe would be key to giving new impetus to relations between the two continents.

"The fates of Africa and Europe are linked. A failure of Africa today will be disaster in Europe tomorrow," Sarkozy, who attended the meeting with three other French ministers, said.

He defended his immigration policy, criticised by migrant rights groups in Europe and Africa as aiming at selecting the best talent and brains from Africa while shutting the doors to poor Africans.

"It was not a question for me to have a selective migrant policy. Immigration for me must be chosen by the country of origin and that of destination," he said.

Sarkozy, France's conservative presidential frontrunner, tightened residency rules after youths in poor suburbs -- many of them home to descendants of immigrants -- went on the rampage last year in a wave of rioting that shocked the country. - Reuters

11 July 2006 07:44, http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=276870&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__africa/

Africans, Europeans release migration plan

By JOHN THORNE, ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

RABAT, Morocco -- Delegates from 58 countries promised Tuesday to combine tougher immigration enforcement with more aid for Africans to help stem a rising tide of illegal migration to Europe.

The plan released by African and European delegates at the end of a two-day meeting on immigration includes proposals for short-term work visas, grants to migrants in Europe to start businesses back home and funding for job creation in regions with high emigration.

It proposes international cooperation on enforcement of immigration laws, along with making it easier for legal migrants to Europe to send money home to Africa, stimulating the local economy.

The plan is non-binding, vague on funding and it wasn't clear how much of the plan would ever be enacted - weaknesses that prompted European Union Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner France Frattini to call for a task force to monitor whether countries follow through.

And the plan is conspicuously silent on corruption in Africa.

Belgian Cooperation Minister Armand de Decker said in an interview that Africa's biggest problem is "bad African governance" leading to the misuse or theft of aid money. Many measures listed in the action plan - from academic exchanges to simple cash handouts - involve government oversight.

"Good governance must become the obsession of Africans," he said.

Decker said European diplomats regularly press African governments to clean up their acts, "but if we do it in public they get offended."

EU officials say migrants have been undaunted by the risks of crossing or by tightened border controls in Europe.

Officials cited examples earlier in the meeting, saying more than 10,000 people have arrived in Spain's Canary Islands off the northwest coast of Africa since the beginning of 2006 - already more than twice as many as in 2005.

In an apparent sign of concern over the problem, some European delegates proposed projects that largely sidestepped African governments.

France, a major destination for migrants, dangled the idea of small loans to encourage Africans to stay home and start businesses.

The migrants' swelling numbers, as well as the high death rate for crossings to Europe, prompted the search for solutions broader than just tough enforcement.

Separately, in Brussels, Belgium, the European Commission proposed a \$3.8 billion fund to promote good governance in Africa, as part of efforts to find solutions to global poverty at the upcoming Group of Eight summit of major economic powers.

The European Union's executive office said the new fund for Africa should be used to encourage reform and should be distributed in addition to regular aid to those countries taking steps to improve governance.

Tuesday, July 11, 2006 · Last updated 4:34 p.m. PT, http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/1105AP_Migration_Meeting.html

Euro-African conference on migration opens in Rabat

Rabat, Morocco, 07/11 - Proceedings of the Euro-African ministerial conference on migration and development opened Monday in Rabat with the participation of 57 African and European countries and representatives of regional and international organisations.

The conference is aimed at devising appropriate strategies to use in curbing and managing migratory flows. The foreign ministers would also seek to initiate a new form of cooperation between Africa and Europe by establishing a solid partnership on the principle of shared responsibility.

In his opening address, Moroccan minister of foreign affairs and cooperation, Mohamed Benaïssa, emphasised that Morocco gives precedence to the adoption by the conference of "a positive and more dynamic approach to migration".

"This approach passes through an optimisation of the potential of long-duration, circular and temporary migrations," he explained.

He expressed optimism that such an approach favoured openness and dialogue, and aimed at greater harmony between African and European needs in terms of employment".

Citing the increasing humanitarian crises brought about by the massive influx of illegal migrants, Benaïssa insisted that "it is now imperative to act directly on the root causes fuelling the migratory phenomenon, which unfortunately, is assuming alarming proportions".

Participants at the conference are expected to solidify efforts in mobilising material and logistical means needed to preserve the rights and dignity of migrants, he insisted.

11 July 2006, <http://www.angolapress-angop.ao/noticia-e.asp?ID=454847>

INTERVIEW-France pushes for cheaper migrant money transfers

Source: Reuters, By Tom Pfeiffer

RABAT, July 10 (Reuters) - France said on Monday it wanted to generate more competition among financial institutions to reduce costs for migrants to transfer their savings home, as part of a raft of proposals to help African countries.

The proposal was among several ideas mooted at a conference of more than 50 European and African countries in Rabat to channel more money and expertise back to migrants' countries of origin to boost development there and stem illegal migration.

"We are putting in place measures to lower the banking costs of these transfers by introducing competition between financial establishments," French Cooperation and Development Minister Brigitte Girardin said in an interview at the conference.

The global market leader in international money transfers is Western Union, a unit of First Data Corp.

The conference was called to address a growing crisis as thousands of impoverished Africans make perilous journeys in search of a new life in Europe.

Many have died in the attempt, often drowning when their small boats capsize in the Atlantic.

The European Union has pushed for African governments to take back illegal migrants who make it to Europe but the process is often slow, complex and painful for the migrants themselves and many end up staying on.

Girardin played up the positive aspects of migration but said there should be improved joint management of migratory flows so they benefited both the rich north and poorer south.

"Often with immigrants that are in our country and in a situation of failure they are given a bit of cash to travel home, but that isn't enough. At best it just helps them come back," Girardin told Reuters.

"But when you manage to accompany people on micro-projects and they in turn create small companies, you really have an operation that is winning for the destination country as much as for the country of origin."

10 Jul 2006 22:10:30 GMT, <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L10555160.htm>

France warns over Africa migrants

PICTURE: (Two would-be illegal immigrants after arriving in an open wooden fishing boat in Tenerife) Thousands of Africans are risking their lives to reach Europe

Europe must be careful not to turn itself into a fortress just to keep out immigrants, a French minister has said. Addressing a European-African migration conference, French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy said the concept of zero immigration was a dangerous myth.

Ministers from 57 European and African nations are meeting in the Moroccan capital Rabat to discuss ways of dealing with migrants.

Increasing numbers of Africans are coming to Europe in search of work.

Delegates are discussing human trafficking and security but also ways of alleviating the poverty which causes many migrants to seek a better life.

Already this year at least 8,000 African migrants have reached Spain's Canary Islands alone.

PICTURE: Click to see map of main routes into Europe

Hundreds more have landed on Malta and the Italian island of Lampedusa.

'El Dorado'

Speaking at the opening of the two-day conference, Mr Sarkozy, who is known for his hardline view on immigration, warned that it would not be in Europe's interest to turn itself into a fortress.

*BOX: Let us offer Africa's youth a future of dignity. Then it will not risk resorting to violence and extremism, or choosing, en masse, the paths of exile
French President Jacques Chirac*

But he warned that Europe could not absorb all those who saw it as an El Dorado - a move which, he said, would destabilise the continent. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/5164514.stm>

The failure to offer opportunities to African youth today would spell disaster for Europe tomorrow, he warned.

Mr Sarkozy, who has been widely attacked for drafting a controversial new law to curb immigration to France, also called for a new financial institution to help African migrants in Europe to send money home.

Delegates also heard a statement from French President Jacques Chirac in which he called for a joint approach to tackle illegal immigration "with respect for human dignity but with firmness".

Illegal migration required an "energetic fight against trafficking networks" along with "co-operation to improve border surveillance," he said, while stressing the need for Europe to enter a development partnership with Africa.

"Let us offer Africa's youth a future of dignity. Then it will not risk resorting to violence and extremism, or choosing, en masse, the paths of exile," he said.

'Managed' migration

The Rabat conference is supposed to develop a common approach between Europe and Africa - tougher policing and action against human trafficking but also measures to deal with the poverty and conflict which drive would-be migrants to seek a better life elsewhere.

BOX: To look into the eyes of a man who has been at sea for seven days, not sure whether he would get to these shores alive or dead - it's just terrible

Austin Taylor, relief co-ordinator

LINKS:

Is migration a problem? <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/5142964.stm>

Senegalese sings of migrant misery <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/5155592.stm>

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres said that the movement of both refugees and migrants was frequently rooted in the broader problem of under-development.

Presenting delegates with a 10-point action plan, Mr Guterres urged governments to work together to protect the rights of both refugees and migrants.

"I hope that this conference will enable the states of Africa and Europe to formulate cooperative approaches to the challenge of development - approaches which can help us to create the conditions that enable people to migrate out of choice, rather than necessity," he said.

Europe talks increasingly about managed migration, choosing the migrants it wants to fill gaps in the labour market. But African countries fear that means they will lose their best and brightest, slowing down their development still further.

Morocco is the jumping-off point for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, from Senegal and Mali, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

But many get to Morocco only to find they cannot go any further - the land routes are closed and there are more patrols at sea.

The Moroccan authorities do not want them there.

They have stopped granting residence permits even to statutory refugees.

Many of the migrants complain of racism and violence.

They stay because going back would be worse - for some because their countries are at war, for others because the shame of admitting defeat is simply too great to be borne.

10 July 2006, 17:11 GMT 18:11 UK, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/5164514.stm>

PanAfrica: Guterres Unveils Action Plan to Protect Rights in Migratory Movements

United Nations High Commission for Refugees (Geneva)

PRESS RELEASE, July 10, 2006

Rabat, Morocco

U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres today called for governments and regional, international and non-governmental organisations to work together to uphold the rights of refugees and migrants in mixed migratory movements.

Unveiling a 10-point action plan at the Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development in the Moroccan capital, Guterres noted that the current movement of people from Africa towards Europe, due to its irregular nature, presented a number of challenges to European and African states.

He said the Rabat meeting, which brings together some 60 European and African countries, provided a timely forum to explore two important and related issues - migration and development. Quoting a UN Declaration, he noted that the right to development is "an inalienable right, by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized."

"It is precisely because they are unable to exercise their right to development that so many people - including migrants who are looking for a better standard of living, and refugees who are looking for safety and security -- feel obliged to leave their own country and move elsewhere," Guterres said.

"While we must maintain this fundamental distinction between refugees and migrants, we must also recognize that both forms of mobility are often rooted in the broader problem of under-development. I hope that this conference will enable the states of Africa and Europe to formulate cooperative approaches to the challenge of development - approaches which can help us to create the conditions that enable people to migrate out of choice, rather than necessity."

Guterres called for "special attention" on the phenomenon of so-called "mixed movements" in which migrants and refugees move alongside each other, often in an irregular manner, using similar routes and modes of transport. Such movements are termed "irregular" because they often take place without the requisite documentation and frequently involve human smugglers. The people who move in this manner often place their lives at risk, are obliged to travel in inhumane conditions and may be exposed to exploitation and abuse. States regard such movements as a threat to their sovereignty and security.

"While recognizing the difficulties that such movements can pose for states in terms of national and local security, we must ensure that the measures taken to curb irregular migration do not prevent refugees from gaining the international protection which they need and to which they are entitled," Guterres said.

The High Commissioner stressed that UNHCR is not -- and does not intend to become -- a migration agency.

"But if my office is to exercise its mandate for the protection of refugees, then it must also become involved in the broader issue of international migration," he said. "Our plan of action shows how the mandate, competencies and resources of my office might be used to assist states in their efforts to address this issue in an effective and equitable manner."

UNHCR's 10-point plan sets out key areas in which action is required to address the issues of mixed and irregular migratory movements in a coherent and practical way - in countries of origin, transit and destination.

While recognising that border controls are essential for combating international crime, including smuggling and trafficking, and to avert security threats, the plan stresses the need for practical protection safeguards to ensure that such measures are not applied in an indiscriminate or disproportionate manner and do not lead to refugees being returned to countries where their life or liberty would be at risk.

The UNHCR plan also identifies the need for training and clear instructions for border guards and immigration officials so they know how to respond to asylum applications, and how to meet the needs of separated children, victims of trafficking and other groups with special needs. It also calls for appropriate reception arrangements to be set up to ensure that the basic human needs of people involved in mixed movements are met.

Guterres said timely solutions were needed for both refugees and migrants, and that refugees in particular should be provided protection and solutions in areas close to their countries of origin. No one should be obliged to make hazardous and costly journeys from one continent to another in order to find safety and security, nor should the problem of mixed and irregular movements of people be seen solely as a problem of countries south of the Mediterranean.

"Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants will continue to enter Europe," he said. "Indeed, the logic of globalisation and demographic change is such that their numbers seem certain to increase in the years to come."

Guterres also underlined the importance for countries to promote social inclusion and tolerance, noting that

refugees and migrants are often confronted with xenophobia in many parts of the world.

The High Commissioner's speech and UNHCR's Action Plan are available on the UNHCR website at www.unhcr.org

July 10, 2006, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200607101276.html>

UN Refugee Chief urges Protection for Refugees in 'irregular movements'

Press Release - U.N. News Center
July 10 2006

The head of the United Nations refugee agency today urged European and African nations to work together to uphold the rights of refugees in 'irregular' migrations - situations where migrants and refugees move alongside each other, often without requisite documentation and with the aid of smugglers.

"While recognizing the difficulties that such movements can pose for States in terms of national and local security, we must ensure that the measures taken to curb irregular migration do not prevent refugees from gaining the international protection which they need and to which they are entitled," High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres said as he unveiled a 10-point plan on the phenomenon at the Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development being held in the Moroccan capital of Rabat.

The people who move in this manner often place their lives at risk, are obliged to travel in inhumane conditions and may be exposed to exploitation and abuse, said Mr. Guterres, noting that States regard such movements as a threat to their sovereignty and security.

The 10-point plan sets out key areas in which comprehensive action is required to address the issues of mixed and irregular migratory movements in a coherent and practical way in countries of origin, transit and destination.

While recognizing that border controls are essential for combating international crime, including smuggling and trafficking, and to avert security threats, the plan stresses the need for practical protection safeguards to ensure that such measures are not applied in an indiscriminate or disproportionate manner and do not lead to refugees being returned to countries where their life or liberty would be at risk.

The plan also identifies the need for training and clear instructions for border guards and immigration officials so they know how to respond to asylum applications, and how to meet the needs of separated children, victims of trafficking and other groups with special needs.

Mr. Guterres said timely solutions were needed for both refugees and migrants, and that refugees in particular should be provided protection and solutions in areas close to their countries of origin, but there was no doubt that migration would continue. "Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants will continue to enter Europe," he said. "Indeed, the logic of globalization and demographic change is such that their numbers seem certain to increase in the years to come."

The High Commissioner encouraged European countries "to respond to this situation in a positive manner, by contributing to responsibility-sharing arrangements, by providing protection to those people who need it, and by ensuring that the public debate on asylum and migration issues is conducted in a calm and rational manner."

July 12, 2006 - 12:52 PM, Harold Doan and Associates Ltd., <http://www.harolddoan.com/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=1539>

Coming to Europe: Rabat conference on migration

by Paul Hazebroek and Vanessa Mock*

Ministers from 30 European and 27 African countries start a two-day meeting in the Moroccan capital, Rabat, on Monday to examine the question of how to deal with the flood of African migrants who often risk their lives in order to get into Europe.

On the eve of the meeting, Radio Netherlands Worldwide had an exclusive interview with European Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini, who will speak in Rabat on behalf of the European executive.

Each year, tens of thousands of Africans from countries south of the Sahara embark on a long and dangerous journey in order to find a better life in Europe. Thousands lose their lives on the way, in the desert, as a result of bullets fired by border police or because the small boats they use to cross the sea sink on the way.

It's mainly the EU's southern member states, such as Spain and Italy but also Malta, which struggle most with the issue of how to handle this tide of mostly illegal migrants. But as the tide of African migrants continues to grow, other EU member states have also started to realise that they can no longer stand idly by, says European Commissioner Franco Frattini.

Plan of action

Mr Frattini warns that in countries such as Mauritania, Algeria and Libya, a further 100,000 Africans are believed to be preparing themselves for the journey to Europe. The Rabat conference, he says, should try to agree on a

communal action plan which also includes the African countries from where the migrants come or through which they pass on their journeys.

An important part of the plan concerns the return of illegal migrants who are stopped at the borders of the EU. Brussels is proposing to pay the cost of flying the migrants back from the last transit country they pass through to their country of origin, provided these transit countries are prepared to take them back when they are stopped at the EU's borders.

However, key transit countries, including Morocco, Algeria and Libya, do not appear to be very enthusiastic. They fear illegal immigrants will remain on their soil if the countries of origin refuse to let them come home.

Mr Frattini (photo) says that in order to encourage the home countries to cooperate, EU strategy is primarily directed at offering these countries a long-term solution for the problem. He says the EU wants to create better conditions for African farmers and fishermen, as well as small-scale entrepreneurs, and that the provision of micro-loans is "extremely important" in this respect.

Future labour needs

At the same time, he also acknowledges that Europe, with its ageing population, indeed stands to gain from a certain level of migration from Africa. He adds that, in future, Europe will not only need high-educated workers, but also cheap seasonal labour. Many Africans already work as seasonal labourers in southern Europe, but are being exploited as most of them are doing so illegally. In order to prevent this in the future, Brussels is seriously considering the introduction of temporary work permits which would allow these workers to enter Europe legally each year.

Another plan would make it possible for these workers to be better prepared for their stay in Europe by providing them with vocational and language training before they come.

Communal asylum policy

For the moment, however, these are still just plans. Mr Frattini says more meetings like the Rabat conference will have to take place before anything concrete happens. Then there's the fact that the EU doesn't have a communal asylum policy. In order for that to change, the EU member states would have to relinquish control over this area of policy. European governments aren't keen on that idea, since it's a highly sensitive area and one over which they would like to go on retaining control.

Finland, which holds the EU's rotating presidency for the remainder of 2006, has put migration high on its agenda, but Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen has already indicated that he too wonders whether now is the right time to make firm decisions on the issue.

The short-term concern is to contain the flood of African migrants and to prevent the kind of tragedies where dozens of migrants lose their lives at sea. In order to tackle this, European patrol ships, airplanes and helicopters will start keeping a close eye on the waters between Africa and Europe, starting on Monday. This communal operation, led by FRONTEX (http://europa.eu/agencies/community_agencies/frontex/index_en.htm), the European agency that manages the communal guarding of the EU's external frontiers, also includes sending teams of aid workers to the Canary Islands (part of Spain) to help African migrants who arrive there. It will also send teams of immigration experts to help identify asylum seekers. A similar operation in Malta will follow soon.

* RNW Internet translation