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Lisbon Forum 2016: concept note

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Lisbon Forum 2016

Migration and human rights: how to structure effective collective action? Best practices and shared knowledge in the Mediterranean and European space*Ismaili Centre, Lisbon, 24-25 November 2016***The context of the Lisbon Forum**

An annual event since it was established in 1994 by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, the Lisbon Forum has been a distinctive platform bringing together high-level participants from Europe, neighbouring regions and other continents to share experience, good practice and expertise. Themes of the Forum have been closely related to the core mission of the Council of Europe: to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Following developments in the region and a refocusing of the Centre's mission to contribute to the Council of Europe's policy towards its neighbouring regions, recent editions of the Forum have sought to address key challenges faced by countries of the Southern Mediterranean and explore possibilities for renewed cooperation with Europe. These recent editions have been supported by the joint EU/CoE Programme "Strengthening democratic reform in the Southern Neighbourhood" (South Programme).

A second phase of the South Programme started in 2015, building on the achievements of the South Programme I and adapting to new realities. SPII calls for sustained action in the field of democratic governance in the southern Mediterranean based on acknowledged CoE expertise in supporting the building of pluralist democracies across Europe and beyond.

SPII will continue to support the organisation of Lisbon Forum by the North-South Centre insofar as it contributes "Towards strengthened democratic governance in the Southern Mediterranean."

Choice of Theme

In view of the current migration pressure in Europe, the Secretary General of Council of Europe has issued guidance to the Council of Europe's 47 member states regarding "the protection of migrants and asylum-seekers". The Council of Europe's important commitment in the field of human rights of migrants is well established and almost all Council of Europe institutions and bodies deal with migration-related issues essentially from a human rights perspective. Moreover, in view of the many reports of ill-treatment of migrants and refugees across Europe today, the SG appointed a Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, whose objective is to collect, analyze information and put forward proposals to member States to improve the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Europe, including the most vulnerable, i.e. children, elderly, women and irregular migrants. This will enable the Council of Europe to provide better assistance and support to member states, especially in locations where a sudden increase in migrants and refugees poses serious challenges to the protection of their fundamental rights. We are experiencing unprecedented irregular mixed migratory flows and there is an urgent need for collective action [SG/Inf\(2015\)33](#).

And while the migratory pressure is especially significant in Europe we cannot overlook that this is all part of a broader global displacement crisis and that countries like Ethiopia or Kenya, let alone Lebanon and Jordan host huge numbers of refugees too. We face a global challenge and not simply a European one. Once more, global interdependence lies at the core of the matter. Responding together in a meaningful way requires a more coordinated, systematic and structured approach, matching not only European challenges but the challenges of our partners too, depending on whether they are a country of origin, country of transit or a country hosting many

displaced persons. We need a “triangle-based” dialogue approach on the principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility.

So far we have experienced that collective action on the field has been largely facilitated by thousands of volunteers, donors, civil society organisations (CSOs) and local authorities who have been since the beginning at the frontline of the so-called migration and refugees’ crisis. We have seen vast numbers of people who, individually or in association with others, have fulfilled a fundamental role in the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrants no matter favourable or non-favourable conditions. Being at the front-line, the role of these people was crucial in alerting about violations of human rights thus enabling civil society organisations and local authorities to react promptly while national and regional authorities found it often challenging to provide an adequate response to the arrival of large amounts of migrants in 2014 and 2015. We have experienced in some cases that - in a first stage - local mayors and civil society organisations filled a gap that was left by national and regional authorities to – in a second stage – pick it up and develop multi-stakeholder coordination structures that proved how much effective collective action could be in managing the situation. The current pressing situation revealed once more that CSOs play a vital role in efforts to implement the overall international protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and that dialogue among all stakeholders is crucial not only to the management of the current crisis in itself, but to the consolidation of democracy in our societies.

In its 14th meeting on 29 January 2016 the Executive Committee of the North South Centre agreed that the migration crisis should be at the core of the LF2016, particularly in light of the involvement in the North-South Migration Dialogue Conference with the PACE in April 2015; the connection to the work of one of this year’s North-South Prize laureates Lora Pappa; and as a follow up to the PACE Resolution 2073 (2015) that specifically calls on the North South Centre - which already has a co-operation agreement with the European Commission - to consider the feasibility of further developing its role in enhancing capacities for dialogue between countries of origin, transit and destination (...) It urges the Executive Committee to put human rights at the centre of this dialogue.

For over two decades the Centre has been promoting dialogue between North and South, fostering solidarity and raising awareness about interdependence and developing regional activities geared to transmitting and promoting the values which are central to the CoE’s mission: democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Furthermore, the operating structure known as the “quadrilogue” which ensures coordination between governments, parliamentary and regional/local authorities representatives and non-governmental organisations has proven a valuable asset. Thanks to its quadripartite configuration and established networks, the Centre is able to reach civil society. It is in line with the mission of the Centre to facilitate dialogue between governmental and non-governmental bodies for the sake of cooperation and collective response.

The Council of Europe deals with migration management focusing on the human rights and dignity of the migrants; the European Agenda on Migration prioritises respect for human rights across each pillar of the action; the African and European leaders who gather at the Valetta Summit on November underlined the importance of protecting human rights of migrants... In its LF2016 the North-South Centre will set up a dialogue for co-operation on a holistic, human rights-based “triangular” approach from the experiences those stakeholders at the frontline of the management of the crisis.

Objectives

The objectives of Lisbon Forum 2016:

- To raise awareness about global interdependence related to the migration crisis by facilitating a dialogue between countries of origin, transit and destination to better understand each partner's challenges for a coordinated response;
- Exchange information, experience and good practice on successful cooperation between national/regional/local structures - governmental and non-governmental - for coordinated action that safeguards migrants access to rights, in particular vulnerable groups such as children and women;
- By presenting concrete case-studies on the field, identify the strengths and weaknesses of coordination among the different actors in the crisis management that ascertain each other's added value and roles;
- Encourage the creation of regional, national and transmed networks working for the defence of displaced people's rights;

Through the specific role performed by the actors at the frontline of the management of the migration crisis, the Forum represents an important opportunity to discuss the state of play in the region and exchange experience and good practice of a quadrilogue coordinated action.

Expected results

- Increased awareness and understanding of the global dimension of the migration crisis and the relevance of a "triangle-based" dialogue approach on the principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility from a human-rights perspective;
- Cooperation at regional and international level for the management of the migration and refugees' crisis is enhanced through exchange of experience and good practice from across CoE member states and Southern Mediterranean partner countries.
- Operational conclusions and recommendations adopted tasking all quadrilogue actors with specific actions to promote advocacy and support for access to rights for displaced people in countries of origin, transit and destination;
- Increased awareness and understanding for role and potential of CSOs that defend human rights to contribute to successful international co-operation initiatives and in turn to democratic consolidation;
- Operational recommendations for the North-South Centre to set up an action plan – within its mission – that contributes to the follow-up of the conclusions of the LF2016;

Proposed format

The Forum will be organised around plenary sessions, roundtables and workshops with activities spread over two days.

The opening session on Thursday 24 November 2016 will consist of high level speakers setting out the international framework of the current global migration crisis.

Subsequent discussions will follow a three-step discussion process:

- An initial roundtable will explore a broad thematic area, contextualising the subject and opening the path to more in depth discussions in workshops.

- Break-off workshops will facilitate more specialised and interactive discussions (i.e. local responses; bottom-down and bottom-up coordination structures; integration models, international cooperation)
- 2nd roundtable to share conclusions and adopt recommendations

Participants

From partner countries: representatives of relevant Ministries, independent democratic governance structures, parliaments, local authorities and civil society

Communication

All communication activities will be done in accordance with the Communication and visibility plan of the South Programme II. It is expected that the Forum will build on and further raise the profile of the EU-CoE joint work in the Southern Mediterranean to support the democratic governance agenda and supporting the development of a common legal space

A dedicated Lisbon forum webpage on the North-South Centre homepage will be linked to directly from the new South Programme website.

Furthermore, following the positive results obtained in previous editions, representatives of relevant media outlets will be invited to attend the sessions to ensure broad coverage of the contents and the outcomes of the Forum.

Additionally, the North-South Centre will develop a specific media plan for the event that will help raise awareness of the Forum and its participants in relevant media outlets

Venue

The LF2016 will take place at the Ismaili Centre, Lisbon, Portugal.

Towards a Strengthened Democratic Governance in the Southern Mediterranean

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