

Declaration of Intent of bilateral cooperation on migration between Egypt and The Netherlands

Migration today is, more than ever, a global issue, taking into consideration the unprecedented human mobility between Africa, the Middle East and Europe in recent years. Egypt and the Netherlands agreed to further consolidate their excellent partnership and to enhance their bilateral cooperation on migration issues, guided by the principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility.

This cooperation aims to maximize the benefits of legal, safe and well-managed migration for the countries of destination, transit and origin, while putting an end to illegal, smuggler-driven migration, thus saving lives and protecting the migrants from exploitation and abuse of smuggling and trafficking networks. At the same time, this cooperation aims to support Egypt's efforts to host refugees.

Migration is a multi-faceted phenomenon that can only be managed in partnership, through a comprehensive approach covering all aspects, whilst fully respecting human rights and the sovereignty of states and taking into account national legislations and particularities as well as international legal standards as far as they are binding for the respective countries. Guided by these principles, the Netherlands and Egypt have set up a bilateral migration dialogue and have agreed to continue that dialogue with the objective of contributing to a future comprehensive action plan in the field of migration.

Egypt's migration and refugee policy aims to combat illegal migration and to fight criminal networks. This entails preventing illegal departures from Egyptian shores, preventing illegal transit migration, in particular via the land border with Libya, and returning migrants who have been identified inside Egypt as having no right to stay in Egypt to their countries of origin. It also entails hosting people in need of international protection according to the Egyptian law and readmitting Egyptian nationals illegally present in the Netherlands, according to the international obligations of both countries. The Netherlands, having regard to its engagement with the EU external migration policy, is committed to support Egypt in reaching these ambitious policy goals, first and foremost along the lines of the following key elements:

1. Economic cooperation to address root causes of irregular migration

Egypt and the Netherlands have a long history of joint cooperation. The Netherlands stands ready to accompany Egypt in the implementation of reforms set out in Egypt's "Vision 2030". Development cooperation will contribute to tackle the root causes of irregular migration.

- Egypt and the Netherlands will continue to cooperate on large multi-annual programs in water, irrigation, agriculture and fishery.
- To create, more employment and income opportunities in Egypt joint programs target private sector development, education, job creation and financial initiatives for women and youth.
- A number of Dutch companies and individuals are investing in Egypt and providing jobs to Egyptians. More opportunities for trade and investment are actively explored.

2. Legal migration

Egypt and The Netherlands will promote existing legal migration pathways between their respective countries for the purpose of addressing labour shortage and skill gaps, in addition to enhancing cultural and academic exchange.

- To this end, Egypt and the Netherlands will stimulate the exchange of experiences and best practices about existing channels of legal migration. In order to make better and more efficient use of these channels, the Netherlands and Egypt will set up a dialogue on expert level to exchange information on the legal framework as soon as possible, if appropriate through expert missions on legal migration;
- Egypt and the Netherlands will jointly investigate possibilities to improve the dissemination of information on existing channels of legal migration to the public,
- Underlining the importance of circular migration and preventing brain drain, Egypt and the Netherlands will explore possible projects within the existing framework to bring forward under the EU Talent Partnership scheme.
- The Netherlands is willing to consider increasing the number of academic scholarships and technical/vocational trainings provided in Egypt in order to enhance employability. Relevant authorities in the Netherlands and Egypt are willing to examine ways to collaborate on the recognition of qualifications within the framework of the Unesco Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education.
- Both sides express readiness to discuss establishing an “Egyptian-Dutch Center” in Egypt to provide technical and vocational skills development, in addition to twinning arrangements between relevant authorities for potential Egyptian migrants qualifying them to attain certificates of proficiency recognized in the Netherlands and the available regular migration alternatives. This could also possibly apply to returnees.

3. Supporting Egypt’s efforts and capabilities to host existing refugees and migrants.

The Netherlands is supporting Egypt with several multi-year programs in order to alleviate the burden carried by Egypt as a result of hosting large numbers of refugees and migrants. This support includes enhancing the resilience of host communities and assisting the Egyptian government to provide protection and basic needs in line with national priorities and international standards.

The Netherlands commits to look favorably to a continued effort to resettle more refugees residing in Egypt within its UNHCR quota.

4. Combatting migrant smuggling and human trafficking and enhancing border management

Egypt reiterates its determination to secure its borders and to combat migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons, in line with its relevant national strategies. The

Netherlands and Egypt are committed to work together to address illegal migration, migrant smuggling and human trafficking, and to enhance border management and to regulate migration through migration management. The Netherlands is interested in further exploring cooperation with Egypt's border management organizations and authorities.

- The Netherlands is willing to consider providing security and technical equipment, training, and capacity building opportunities for the relevant Egyptian authorities in the field of border management, combatting illegal migration and migrant smuggling, as well as identity and documentation fraud.
- The Netherlands is committed to supporting Egypt's efforts in combating trafficking in persons by enhancing prosecution capabilities, devising and advertising protection schemes available for victims of trafficking, and strengthening prevention measures.

5. Awareness raising programs

- Egypt will launch awareness-raising campaigns concerning the issue of irregular migration and smuggling of migrants. The Netherlands stands ready to assist Egypt in that field by identifying opportunities for collaboration in areas in which NL can support.

6. Readmission and Assisted Voluntary Return

Egypt and the Netherlands will work together on assisted voluntary return and readmission based on international law. Return of foreign nationals who are not entitled to stay in the Netherlands is organized with care and with respect of the dignity of each foreign national. Voluntary return will be offered as first opportunity with assisted packages by the Netherlands in specific cases to enhance sustainable return.

In the absence of a valid travel document, the return of Egyptian nationals will require taking the necessary steps for identification. The relevant authorities of the Netherlands and Egypt will cooperate to establish the identity and to provide travel documents if required, herewith facilitating the process of respectful and dignified return.

- In support of this process, the Netherlands and Egypt concluded a Declaration of Intent on migration and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), which are appended to the declaration, for the assisted voluntary return and readmission of Egyptian nationals to their home country. These procedures will be applied in each individual case.
- Egypt and the Netherlands underline the importance of engaging in serious discussions between Egypt and each of Belgium and Luxembourg with a view to conclude agreed elements on the procedures for assisted voluntary return and readmission of Egyptian nationals to their home country.

- Both sides commit through respective liaison officers and within their respective national legal frameworks, to exchange relevant information with a view to undertake necessary action regarding nationals from both countries who may represent a breach and/or a threat to security or public safety.
- Egypt and the Netherlands furthermore take note of the joint commitment of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands and Egypt to launch a dialogue on an arrangement on mutual exemption for holders of diplomatic passports from entry visa.

This document will enter into effect from the date of signature.

Signatures

Egypt and the Netherlands reaffirm their intention to closely cooperate to ensure the effective implementation of this declaration of Intent.

Signed in Cairo, Egypt, on 26 September 2021 in two originals in Arabic and in English languages. All texts being equally authentic. In case of divergence in interpretation, the English text shall prevail.

For the government of Egypt

For the government of the Netherlands



Name, Function

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