

# Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the EU Strategy on Syria during the plenary session of the

*Check against delivery!*

Thank you very much.

I am particularly glad we have the opportunity to share in this hemicycle again the work we are doing on Syria, especially today as the UN has reconvened the talks; the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva just started this morning. I just spoke a couple of hours ago with Staffan de Mistura again, the UN Special Envoy [for Syria] who has concluded this morning the first renewed round of talks with the Syrian parties aiming at entering into the substance of the political transition, including on constitutional set-up. This is the process on which and in which the European Union is investing, supporting the intra-Syrian talks, the UN facilitation and the work of the Syrian opposition, the civil society, especially the women of Syria – work that we support every day with our teams, both in Geneva and in Brussels, but also in the region.

So, the European Union has a special role to play, to help the Syrian people end the war in their country. The European Union is not a military actor in Syria – I know some might argue that this makes us a less powerful player in the region. Even if, as you know well, I always value a lot whenever we manage or we decide to use also our hard power in some situations that require this, I strongly believe that the fact that we are not a military player in the Syrian crisis makes us stronger in the political context of trying to solve the problem and the crisis there.

Because we have not taken part in the devastation of the country, and at the same time we have been on the side of the civilian population, all throughout the war, as the first humanitarian donor for Syrians both within and outside of the country. Exactly for this reason we have a stronger role to play when it comes to the political mediation and solution.

First of all, let me stress one basic thing that sometimes we take for granted, but I think in these times we are living, it is definitely not something that is irrelevant: we are the ones contributing to the humanitarian work inside Syria and around Syria. We are the ones bringing aid through the UN agencies and international organisations; trying to save every single life; trying to bring every single child to school; trying to guarantee the minimum basic living conditions for Syrians.

This is something I will always be proud of. Some might consider that *realpolitik* goes as far as making this irrelevant. Let me tell you the basic

condition not only of humanity from my perspective, but also for the political future of Syria, is that there are some Syrians left. I am sorry, this is very hard to say but our work of saving lives on the ground, guaranteeing that people have humanitarian aid, medical assistance, food, water – basic, basic living conditions – is first a humanitarian duty, and second is also a major political asset also to be a recognised, trusted political actor for the parties. It is precious, so much precious that to me it is invaluable.

Because we have not destroyed, because we help people's daily life, we can better help the Syrians rebuild the future of the country. And this is something that not only the international community, not only the region, but also and first of all the Syrians recognise to the European Union. This is the core of the European Union's Strategy on Syria – adopted by the Council on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, with Conclusions endorsing my joint communication with the Commission [Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council – Elements for an EU Strategy for Syria]. This is our answer to anyone who believes – as I was saying – that we are powerless because we are not shooting. It is exactly the contrary. The entire European Union is united behind the goal of a political solution to the war, and the means to achieve it. It demonstrates what we can do in practice to end this war and ensure that lives are protected, rights respected, democratic aspirations and needs are met.

In the Strategy we outlined a clear set of objectives: seeking a political solution to the conflict within the UN framework, supporting the opposition – including the High Negotiation Committee – to develop their proposal for a meaningful and inclusive transition, and in parallel – as I said – working to save lives, to promote human rights, to strengthen civil society, the role of women, to promote accountability for war crimes – extremely important, I will come back to that – and to support the resilience of the Syrian people.

The Strategy indicates the direction of our actions; it is not a philosophical paper; it is a roadmap for acting together. Two days after it was endorsed, we have begun to put it in practice, hosting the major Ministerial conference on Syria in Brussels, together with the Secretary General of the United Nations. We brought together 80 delegations from countries and international organisations from the region and the entire world, raising more than 9 billion euros until 2020, including 5.6 billion euros for 2017 alone. There was a risk of the international community being disrupted; of having a sort of donors' *fatigue* when it comes to the support to Syrians and I was glad to see that we managed to mobilise more resources than last year in London [Supporting Syria and the Region – London 2016]. This is important, it makes a difference to the lives of the people on the ground. But again – as I said – it makes a difference also for the UN and our support to the UN system, another political objective we have very deep in our hearts and minds in this period of time and it strengthens the possibility for a political work to be done in Geneva.

More than two thirds of this amount comes from the European Union and the Member States. So, once again, we are throwing a lifeline to millions of Syrians, inside the country and in the region, building in this way the basic

conditions for the future of Syria, the survival of Syrians.

As you might remember, on the eve of the Brussels Conference, a terrible chemical attack hit Idlib's province and I do not believe this was a complete coincidence. Normally, as the international community gathers to work for peace and show unity, and determination and commitment, the enemies of peace tried to derail its efforts.

But that very same day, from Brussels, from the European Union, from the UN, from so many countries and organisations, we sent two powerful messages. First, we all agreed that those responsible for these crimes must be held accountable. And last week, exactly one week ago, on Europe's Day, the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, in New York, I was briefing the UN Security Council and sharing with them the fact that the European Union fully stands behind the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in its investigations: this is the right forum to document any responsibilities for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The Brussels Conference also made a call for support to the new "International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism," established by the UN General Assembly, which will assist in investigating and prosecuting war crimes cases in Syria. Accountability for us is key.

Second, in Brussels we all committed to work for a political solution agreed among the Syrian parties as the only just but also the only realistic way to end the war.

Accountability and the need to support a political solution and to be serious about that: these were also the main messages we heard from the representatives of the Syrian civil society, Syrian women, during the Brussels Conference. We heard a very powerful word from them: *hudna, hudna, hudna*. They were repeating it to us, and this means "we need a ceasefire". We need violence to decrease and peace to reach some areas of the country. For three days, around the Brussels Conference, over 40 Syrians from all parts of Syria and from the diaspora, representatives of civil society organisations with very different backgrounds, women and men, different ages, worked to agree on a set of common messages for the Conference. Their representatives delivered their messages to the ministers in the political session. We have immediately turned the Strategy's recognition of the civil society's crucial role into practice and I know this Parliament is particularly supportive of that, rightly so. These are the people who can reach across the conflict lines, talk to each other, heal the wounds of over six years of war, to make reconciliation truly possible on the ground, locally. And the expertise they hold will also be essential to post-conflict reconstruction.

In fact, let me say the Syrians who came to Brussels from within and outside of Syria, different parts of the country, agreed very much with our determination to begin preparations for the day after the end of the conflict. Because too many times – too many times – the international community – and also Europe – was not prepared for *winning the peace* after a war had ended. It is a mistake that we cannot afford anymore, Syria and the Syrians cannot afford that mistake. Of course, reconstruction will only begin when a political transition will be under way, not before. This is in the hands of the Syrian talks in Geneva under the UN auspices that the European

Union is accompanying day by day. But the European Union has already started to engage and to contribute to the post-agreement planning in close cooperation with the United Nations and the World Bank. Also because this can be a very powerful tool, maybe one of the most powerful tools today, to support and accompany the political process, showing the peace dividend, being an incentive to the Syrian parties to find and implement an agreement.

The same logic marks our Syria Strategy: we don't try to bet on the future, but to prepare for it and contribute to shaping it, together with the UN, together with the powers of the region, but most of all, with the people of Syria. Because peace can only come from the Syrian people, from a political solution agreed by the Syrian parties.

This is the most complex and the most violent conflict in our times and it is clear to all in the world that no regional or global power alone has the strength to solve it. We need forces to join along one line, which is a political solution agreed by the Syrian parties in Geneva under the UN auspices.

All different initiatives – and we wish that all of them manage to deliver and to be implemented, including the ones taken in Astana – now have the big responsibility to converge towards Geneva, to help the Syrians build peace and find their own path towards national reconciliation. And there are no shortcuts for that. We have seen it for six years: Geneva, the UN process, the multilateral framework, these intra-Syrian talks is and must remain the only way to transition.

As I said today, Staffan de Mistura has resumed the talks with a clear intention of entering into the substance of the transition, starting from the constitutional set-up of the country. The European Union stands there in Geneva, as well as the work we do in Brussels and in the region, to accompany the UN, their work, to accompany the Syrian people for a democratic, united and inclusive Syria to finally bring peace to the country and to our entire region.

Thank you.

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## **Statement by the Spokesperson on the murder of journalists in Mexico**

The continuing wave of targeted assassinations and attacks against journalists in Mexico raises serious concerns. Yesterday, two journalists, Javier Valdez, laureate of the International Press Freedom Award, and

Jonathan Rodríguez Córdova were shot dead while Sonia Córdova was seriously injured. The EU expresses its deepest condolences to the families and colleagues of the victims, and wishes a prompt recovery to Mrs Córdova.

Swift and transparent investigations are needed in order to bring perpetrators of all crimes to justice. In this context we note the request issued after the first crime by Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto for the Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Freedom of Expression (FEADLE) to support local authorities in the investigation.

These incidences of violence – with seven murders of journalists since the beginning of the year and fifteen in 2016 – make Mexico one of the most dangerous countries in the world for media workers. The Mexican authorities are expected to effectively protect journalists, to allow them to work without fear of reprisals and to end impunity in the cases of crimes against journalists and activists.

The EU remains firmly committed to promoting freedom of expression and freedom of press. The existence of free, diverse and independent media is an indispensable precondition for the protection and promotion of democracy.

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## [European Agenda on Security: Commission sets out new approach on interoperability of information systems](#)

In addition to providing an update on progress made on key files, the report focuses on the ongoing work to improve information management for borders and security and sets out the Commission's new approach towards achieving the interoperability of EU information systems for security, border and migration management by 2020. Following the recent global cyberattack, the report also stresses the Commission's commitment to accelerate work to review the 2013 EU Cybersecurity Strategy in order to provide an effective response to cyber threats.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"The value of our security information is maximised when our systems talk to each other. The complex and fragmented systems we have today make us vulnerable. Actionable information is not always available for the law enforcement officials that need it. Today, we present a clear vision on how to act to correct this. To connect the dots and to eliminate blind spots to step up the security of our citizens across the EU."*

Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** said: *"The recent tragic*

*attacks in Europe have highlighted the importance of effective information sharing between Member State authorities. The approach we are outlining today sets out a targeted and intelligent way of using the existing data to best effect. What we propose would be a step-change in the way we manage data for security, helping national authorities better addressing transnational threats and detecting terrorists who act across borders.”*

In April 2016, the Commission presented a Communication on stronger and smarter information systems for borders and security and launched the work of the High Level Expert Group on Information Systems and Interoperability. The High Level Expert Group delivered its [report on 11 May](#) confirming the views expressed in the April 2016 Communication, and putting forward recommendations towards the interoperability of information systems. Today’s report takes stock of the recommendations of the High Level Expert Group, and proposes the way forward to address structural shortcomings under the three main areas: (i) maximising the utility of existing information systems; (ii) where necessary, developing complementary systems to close information gaps; and (iii) ensuring interoperability between our systems.

Over the past year, the Commission has put forward a number of proposals with the aim of closing the outstanding information gaps, including the establishment of new systems such as the EU Entry/Exist System and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) as well as reinforcing existing ones such as the Schengen Information System, Eurodac and the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS).

Today’s sets out a new approach to the management of data, where all centralised EU information systems for security, border and migration management are interoperable in full respect of data protection and fundamental rights. The main features of this approach are:

- **European search portal** – allowing the systems to be searched simultaneously, in full compliance with data protection safeguards and possibly with more streamlined rules for access to the systems by law enforcement authorities;
- **Shared biometric matching service** – enabling searches across different information systems holding biometric data, possibly with hit/no-hit flags indicating the connection with related biometric data found in another system;
- **Common identity repository** – based on alphanumeric identity data (e.g. dates of birth, passport numbers) and detecting whether a person is registered under multiple identities in different databases.

The proposed approach would overcome the current weakness in the EU’s data management architecture eliminating blind spots. As a result, the EU Agency responsible for information system management, eu-LISA, would play a crucial role in providing technical expertise and bringing the work towards the interoperability of information systems forward. In order to allow eu-LISA to implement this new approach, the Commission will present a legislative proposal to strengthen the Agency’s mandate in June 2017.

Next steps

The Commission will discuss the new approach with the European Parliament and the Council with an aim of reaching a common understanding on the way forward before the end of 2017. The discussion will feed into the proposal on interoperability which the Commission will present as soon as possible.

As the same time, the Commission calls on the European Parliament and the Council to move swiftly on the delivery of legislative priorities on information systems for security, borders and migration management.

In the area of aviation security, the Commission has facilitated contacts at political level to ensure coordinated actions between the United States and the EU. A meeting between the United States and the EU side will take place in Brussels on 17 May 2017, in order to jointly assess the potential risks and work towards a common approach to address possible developing threats.

## Background

President Juncker's [State of the Union](#) address in September 2016 and the European Council conclusions of [December 2016](#) highlighted the importance of overcoming the current shortcomings in data management and of improving the interoperability of existing information systems. Recent terrorist attacks have brought this into even greater focus, highlighting the urgent need for information systems to be interoperable, and to eliminate the current blind spots where terrorist suspects can be recorded in different, unconnected databases under different aliases.

In [April 2016](#) the Commission presented a Communication on stronger and smarter information systems for borders and security, initiating a discussion on how information systems in the European Union can better enhance border management and internal security. In June 2016, the Commission set up a High Level Expert Group on Information Systems and Interoperability to take this work forward and to address the legal, technical and operational challenges to achieve interoperability. The High Level Expert Group held its last meeting on 25 April 2017 and presented the [final report](#) on 11 May 2017.

The [European Agenda on Security](#) guides the Commission's work in this area, setting out the main actions to ensure an effective EU response to terrorism and security threats in the European Union. Since the adoption of the agenda, significant progress has been made in its implementation, paving a way towards an effective and genuine and [Security Union](#).

For More Information

[Communication](#): 7<sup>th</sup> Progress Report on Security Union

[Communication](#): Stronger and smarter information systems for borders and security

[Communication](#): Delivering on the European Agenda on Security to fight against terrorism and pave the way towards an effective and genuine Security Union

[Communication](#): European Agenda on Security

[Factsheet](#): EU Information Systems

[Factsheet](#): Security Union

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## Relocation and Resettlement: Commission calls on all Member States to deliver and meet obligations

As a result of the increased efforts of Member States, the number of persons relocated so far in 2017 is almost as many as in the whole of 2016. The total number of relocations now stands at 18,418, proving that relocation works if there is the will to abide by what was agreed together in a spirit of sincere cooperation. However, whilst most Member States are active and relocate regularly, some have still not relocated at all, disregarding their legal obligation. On resettlement, Member States have continued to make significant progress, with safe and legal pathways being provided to 16,163 persons so far, beyond two thirds of the agreed resettlements under the EU scheme. Building on the recommendations from the previous month, today's report is in particular focusing on those Member States that are not delivering on their commitments.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"The results so far prove that if there is will and determination of Member States, relocation can work. The success of the relocation scheme cannot depend only on just a few. Solidarity in legal, political and moral terms is not susceptible to different interpretations. I call on those Member States who have systematically failed to deliver on their obligations to start doing so at once. The overall figures on resettlement show what strengthened EU-level cooperation and coordination can do in practice, and it is high time we achieved the same for relocation."*

### Relocation

The positive trend on relocation has continued with an additional 2,078 persons relocated since the last report (1,368 from Greece and 710 from Italy). As of 12 May, 18,418 relocations have been carried out in total; 5,711 from Italy and 12,707 from Greece. However, despite the continuing positive progress, the current pace of relocation is still below what is needed to meet the targets set to ensure that all those eligible are relocated over the coming months.

Whereas in Greece the current number of 12,400 relocation applicants registered is expected to remain stable, Italy still needs to ensure that all persons eligible for relocation are registered. In addition to the 2,500 relocation candidates currently registered in Italy, 700 persons are expected

to be registered soon as well as the more than 1,100 Eritreans who have arrived in Italy in 2017. However, with the total number of people eligible for relocation present in the two countries being well below what was foreseen in the Council Decisions and taking into account the progress registered so far, it is perfectly achievable to relocate all those eligible by September 2017 if Member States demonstrate the political will and determined action to deliver on what they have jointly agreed. In any case, the legal obligation to relocate those eligible in Greece and Italy will not cease after September.

Although most Member States are now active and pledging and relocating regularly, **Hungary, Poland and Austria** remain the only Member States that have not relocated a single person. This is in breach of their legal obligations, the commitments taken towards Greece and Italy and the fair sharing of responsibility. **Austria** has however formally pledged to relocate 50 persons from Italy, a decision which the Commission welcomes. Moreover, the **Czech Republic** has not been active in the scheme for almost a year.

In this respect, the recommendations in today's report focus mainly on those Member States that have not yet implemented the Council Decisions, notably calling on **Hungary and Poland** to start pledging and relocating immediately, the **Czech Republic** to restart relocation without delay and **Austria**, which has now started pledging from Italy, to start pledging from Greece.

Recommendations are also addressed to encourage a more effective implementation of the Council decisions in other Member States:

- **Bulgaria and Slovakia** should show more flexibility as regards their preferences and should start relocating from Italy as soon as possible;
- **Ireland and Estonia**, in cooperation with **Italy**, should find mutually acceptable solutions on additional security interviews in order for relocations to start as soon as possible;
- A number of Member States should increase their monthly pledges (**Spain, Belgium and Croatia** for both **Italy and Greece**; **Germany, Romania and Slovakia** for **Greece** and **France** for **Italy**) while **Cyprus** should start pledging again for Italy and relocating as soon as possible;
- Relocating Member States as a whole should increase their capacity to process application requests, avoid overly restrictive preferences and delays and limit requirements causing delays in the transfer procedure and give priority to applications concerning vulnerable applicants, in particular unaccompanied minors;
- In addition, **Italy** should urgently speed up the procedures to identify and register all eligible applicants as soon as possible and ensure that those eligible for relocation arriving in Italy are channelled in an orderly manner to specifically designated relocation hubs. For this purpose, the Commission recently provided €15.33 million in emergency assistance to improve the functioning of the relocation scheme in Italy.

The Commission calls on Member States to follow up its recommendations and significantly accelerate their relocation efforts in a spirit of mutual cooperation and trust before the next report in June 2017. Moreover, the Commission urges those Member States that have not relocated anyone, or that

have not pledged for Italy and Greece for almost a year, to start doing so immediately and within the next month. If no action is taken, the Commission will then specify in its next report in June its position on making use of its powers under the Treaties and in particular on the opening of infringement procedures. The Commission stands ready to assist Member States in making progress towards meeting their obligations.

## Resettlement

The resettlement scheme as a whole remains on track. With 16,163 persons resettled to 21 countries<sup>[1]</sup> as of 12 May, more than two thirds of the agreed 22,504 resettlements under the EU resettlement scheme have already been carried out. Since 10 April 2017, 671 people have been resettled; mainly from Turkey, but also from Jordan and Lebanon. This represents important progress when compared to the limited numbers Member States resettled in 2014 and 2015 via national or multilateral schemes and clearly demonstrates the added value and potential of strengthened EU-level cooperation and coordination on resettlement.

However, while some Member States and Associated Countries have already fulfilled their targets (namely Estonia, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland), resettlement efforts remain uneven. Nine Member States (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Croatia, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) have yet to start resettling within the ongoing EU-level schemes.

The pace of resettlements from Turkey, included in the overall figure of resettlement, continues to advance well with 1,077 Syrians having been resettled since the last report. A total of 5,695 Syrian refugees have now been provided with safe and legal passage to Europe under the EU-Turkey Statement. The overall number of remaining pledges for resettlement from Turkey now stands at 25,040 while Romania is preparing to resettle shortly via this mechanism for the first time.

Whilst significant progress has been achieved, Member States who are still far from reaching their targets and those Member States who have not yet resettled under the EU schemes should step up their efforts to resettle as soon as possible to contribute to the joint efforts to provide safe and legal pathways to the EU for persons in need of international protection and to implement the EU-Turkey Statement.

## Background

The temporary emergency relocation scheme was established in two Council Decisions in September 2015, in which Member States committed to relocate persons in need of international protection from Italy and Greece. The relocation decisions concern the commitment to relocate 98,255 people, after the Council adopted an amendment to the 2nd Council Decision on relocation on 29 September 2016 to make 54,000 places not yet allocated available for the purpose of legally admitting Syrians from Turkey to the EU.

On 8 June 2015, the Commission adopted a proposal on a European Resettlement

Scheme, which was followed by an agreement among the Member States on 20 July 2015 to resettle 22,504 persons in clear need of international protection.

The [European Council on 7 March](#) 2016 called for an acceleration of the implementation of relocation in order to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Greece. In its [conclusions of 20 and 21 October](#), the European Council reiterated its call for further action to accelerate the implementation of the relocation and resettlement schemes in light of the urgent need to provide support to Greece and Italy. The [European Council on 15 December](#) endorsed the Joint Action Plan on the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, which included the relocation target for Greece of 3,000 monthly transfers and reiterated its call to further intensify efforts to accelerate relocation, in particular for unaccompanied minors, and existing resettlement schemes.

The EU Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016 provides that for every Syrian being returned from Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled from Turkey to the EU. This principle applies as of 4 April 2016. Priority is given to migrants who have not previously entered or tried to enter the EU irregularly.

The Commission on 13 July 2016 proposed a permanent [EU Resettlement Framework](#) to establish a common set of standard procedures for the selection of resettlement candidates and a common protection status for persons resettled to the EU to streamline and better focus European resettlement efforts in the future.

The Commission adopted on 16 March 2016 the First Report on Relocation and Resettlement. The Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Reports were adopted respectively on [12 April](#), [18 May](#), [15 June](#), [13 July](#), [28 September](#), [9 November](#), [8 December 2016](#), [28 February](#), [2 March](#) and [12 April 2017](#).

For More Information

[Communication: Twelfth Report on Relocation and Resettlement](#)

[Annex 1: Relocations from Greece](#)

[Annex 2: Relocations from Italy](#)

[Annex 3: Relocations from Italy and Greece](#)

[Annex 4: Resettlement State of Play](#)

[FACTSHEET: Relocation and Resettlement](#)

[FACTSHEET: Managing the refugee crisis: EU financial support to Greece](#)

[The European Agenda on Migration](#)

[Council Decision on the relocation of 40,000 people from Italy and Greece](#)

[Council Decision on the relocation of 120,000 people from Italy and Greece](#)

[Council Decision \(EU\) 2016/1754 of 29 September 2016 amending Decision \(EU\) 2015/1601 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece](#)

[Council Conclusions on Resettlement of 20,000 persons in need of international protection](#)

[EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016](#)

[1] Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, France, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom

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## [Commission introduces new measures to fight poaching and to end trade in raw ivory](#)

### **Is the Commission banning ivory exports?**

The export of raw ivory is banned. The Commission guidance document recommends that EU Member States cease issuing export documents for **raw ivory**. Without an export document, no export of ivory can take place. Between 2013 and 2016, around 1900 old ivory tusks were exported legally from the EU to Asia, marking a sharp increase compared to previous years. Such exports will no longer be possible under the new guidance document.

The **export of worked ivory** will only be possible under very strict conditions. Only items acquired before 1976 can be exported and it is for the person wishing to export the items to demonstrate that they were acquired before that date. If such evidence cannot be provided by the applicant, then no export document will be delivered by the exporting EU Member State.

The legal export of worked ivory from the EU has also increased in recent years, reaching several thousand items annually. The most commonly exported products are small items made of ivory or containing ivory, musical instruments (especially pianos with ivory keys), carvings and antiques. The Commission guidance document recommends that EU Member States exercise a high level of scrutiny before authorising any export of worked ivory. It details, in particular, what type of evidence demonstrating the legality of the items can be accepted.

### **What are the international and EU rules on ivory trade?**

International ivory trade is banned under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), with narrowly defined exemptions (for example for items acquired before elephants became protected under CITES).

EU rules on ivory trade are more restrictive than the CITES regime in many instances, notably as they regulate domestic trade in ivory, which is not required under CITES.

### **Can I import ivory into the EU? Can I purchase ivory goods and bring them in to the EU?**

Import of ivory is prohibited, except for very narrow exemptions. Most of the ivory traded into the EU consists of hunting trophies and of old carvings or musical instruments imported as personal belongings (for example as part of a removal). These imports can only take place with the relevant export and import documents and are subject to very strict controls at the borders by customs agencies.

### **What is the EU doing against illegal ivory trade in the EU?**

The Commission is fully committed to fight illegal ivory trade. Tackling ivory trafficking is a priority for the EU. Under the EU Action Plan against wildlife trafficking, the Commission, enforcement agencies in the Member States and Europol have stepped up action against ivory trafficking. This is already delivering first results. Member States seized more than 2.5 tonnes of ivory in 2016, the biggest volume in recent years. Most of this ivory was seized in the EU on its way to Asia.

### **Why is the EU not banning all intra-EU trade in ivory?**

Intra-EU trade in ivory is limited and strictly regulated. Domestic ivory is authorised only for ivory items imported into the EU before elephant species obtained maximum protection under the CITES Convention (18 January 1990 for the African elephant and 1 July 1975 for the Asian elephant) and subject to strict controls. Domestic EU trade can only take place if a certificate has been issued to this effect by the relevant EU Member State, except for “worked items” acquired before 3 March 1947 – , which can be traded in the EU without a certificate.

Since the international ban on ivory trade came into effect, the demand for ivory in Europe has fallen considerably. Intra-EU trade consists mostly of antiques and EU Member States have not been identified as important destination markets for ivory of illegal origin. However, there have been some instances of illegal trade in ivory items within the EU, and there are differences between Member States in applying EU rules on ivory trade. Therefore, the new guidance document sets out criteria and recommendations for Member States to further strengthen vigilance and controls.