MISSION REPORT

Following the DMAS Mission to Egypt 30 October - 2 November 2016

Delegation for relations with the Mashreq countries

Members of the mission:
Marisa Matias (GUE/NGL) (Leader of the mission)
Ramona Nicole Mănescu (PPE)
Gilles Pargneaux (S&D)
Francesc Gambús (PPE)
Andrea Cozzolino (S&D)
Javier Nart (ALDE)
1. Introduction

Six Members of the Delegation for relations with the Mashreq countries, led by Chair Marisa Matias, conducted a mission to Cairo from 30 October to 3 November 2016. The mission took place in the framework of the 11th Interparliamentary Meeting of the European- and the Egyptian Parliament. The overall purpose of the visit was to strengthen bilateral relations of the two parliamentary bodies and to encourage stronger ties between Egypt and the European Union (EU). The visit of the DMAS delegation was very timely for MEPs to carry out their own assessment of the current political and socio-economic situation after a vacuum that lasted four years due to the aftermath of the Arab spring turmoil in Egypt.

The key objectives were:

- To meet Egyptian authorities and institutional partners in order to strengthen the development of balanced political, economic and social relations between the parties through dialogue and cooperation after a four-year suspension;
- To observe the state of democratic transition in Egypt;
- To identify Egypt’s needs in terms of cooperation with the EU on the one hand, and to identify Egypt’s role in trying to solve regional crises such as in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya and Palestine on the other hand;
- To assess the state of implementation of bilateral cooperation in light of the European Neighbourhood Policy and within the framework of the revived Association Agreement;
- To analyse the acute security risks posed to Egypt by the expansion of the Islamic State Group and other terrorist groups, as well as the need to step up cooperation in the fight against international terrorism, radicalisation, violent extremism and how to address root causes throughout the region;
- To assess the IMF financial assistance of 12 billion US dollars (approved on 11 November 2016 by the IMF) and the state of play of a comprehensive economic reform program as stated in the government plan that was approved by the parliament;
- To meet Egyptian human rights organisations and representatives of civil society to discuss the overall human rights situation and, in particular, the asset-freezing criminal court decision as well as the so called “NGO-law” currently under preparation by the Egyptian Ministry for Social Solidarity;
- To accomplish a fact-finding mission to the EU co-funded Caritas Centre in Cairo in order to observe the medical and social support provided to refugees in Egypt who originate mostly from Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia.
- To learn about the situation of the Christian Copts under the current regime of President El-Sisi and the relations between Muslims and Christians in Egypt.

Throughout the three days of work, the DMAS delegation took part in:

- One briefing session with the acting EU Chargé d’affaires and the EU Delegation staff.
- Six official meetings with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sameh Shoukry, Speaker of the Egyptian Parliament, Dr Aly Abdel Aal, Minister of International Cooperation, Minister of Social Solidarity, Minister of Immigration and

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1 Annex II Working Program
Egyptian Expatriate Affairs, and Heads of Committees for Social Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Human Rights.

- One meeting with Dr Ahmed El Tayeb, Grand Imam of the Al Azhar Mosque.
- One meeting with Pope Tawadros II, Pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church.
- One field visit to the EU co-funded Caritas Centre in Cairo.
- One meeting with NGO representatives and representatives of civil society.
- One reception with Members States’ Heads of Mission hosted by the acting EU Chargé d’Affaires a.i. Mr Reinhold Brender.
- One press conference.

Ahead of the mission, a first in camera session was organised on 14 September 2016 in Strasbourg on the political and economic situation in Egypt, in the presence of the Egyptian ambassador to the European Union, H.E., Ehab Fawzy. A second in camera meeting took place on 20 October in Brussels on the human rights situation with representatives of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies. Both meetings were attended by the EEAS and DG NEAR.

The EP Delegation wishes to express its gratitude to the Egyptian authorities, both in Brussels and in Cairo, for the facilitation, kindness and hospitality shown throughout the three-day visit. In a similar vein, the delegation underlines that the EU Delegation to Egypt spared no efforts in devising an intensive programme of activities and meetings, which allowed the delegation to make the most of its visit.

2. Egypt’s economy

Egypt is facing tremendous economic constraints battered notably by years of political upheavals and demographic challenges with an overwhelming current population of 94 million people. Egypt is the most populous country in the Middle East and the third-most populous on the African continent (after Nigeria and Ethiopia).

On 11 November 2016, the IMF agreed to grant Egypt a 12 billion US dollars three-year loan facility, to support the government’s reform program aimed at plugging a budget gap and rebalancing the currency markets in order to step forward at this critical time. The Egyptian government has acknowledged the need for quick implementation of economic reforms to restore macroeconomic stability and to support strong, sustainable and job-rich growth. Among the reforms agreed are crucial subsidy cuts, introducing Value Added Tax (VAT) and reducing bureaucracy for foreign investors. The reform program also aimed to bring down the budget deficit and government debt, to raise growth and to create jobs, especially for women and young people. It also focused on strengthening the social safety net to protect the most vulnerable during the process of adjustment of economic reformation.

Over the program period the general government debt is expected to decline from a current level of 98% in 2016 to about 88% of GDP in 2018. The aim is to raise revenue and rationalize spending, to reduce the deficit and to free up public funds for high-priority spending, such as

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1 Based on the United Nations latest estimates as of 9 December 2016.
infrastructure, health, education and social protection. The government will advance the structural reform agenda to help increase investment, to improve the business environment and to strengthen the role of the private sector. On 3rd November 2016, Egypt devalued its currency by 48 percent, meeting an important demand set by the IMF in exchange for a 12 billion US dollars loan over three years to overhaul the country's economy\(^1\). At the same time, the Central bank increased interest rates to rebalance the currency market.

The EU is engaged in an EU assistance program for Egypt which involves commitments of over 1 billion EUR. In addition, on 10 September 2016, the European Commission announced the provision of EU-financial assistance of another 50 million EUR with the aim of improving Egyptian people's lives. The EU is providing this amount through four development projects in Egypt, in the areas of human rights, private sector development, urban development, energy and water. The objectives of these programs are in line with the priorities set out for EU-cooperation with Egypt for the period 2014-2015, namely: 1) Poverty Alleviation and local socio-economic development; 2) Governance, Transparency and Business Environment and; 3) Quality of life and environment. In addition, 1.2 billion Euros have been committed (in ongoing commitments).

### 3. EU cooperation with Egypt

The Association Agreement established a free-trade area with the elimination of tariffs on industrial products and significant concessions on agricultural products. In addition, an ambitious agreement on agriculture, processed agricultural and fisheries products entered into force on 1 June 2010. Since 2004, EU- Egypt bilateral trade has more than doubled and reached its highest level in 2015 (from EUR 11.8 billion in 2004 to EUR 27. billion in 2015). The EU is traditionally Egypt's main trading partner, covering 31.3% of Egypt's trade volume in 2015 and ranking first both as Egypt's import and export partner. Moreover, the EU is the number one investor in Egypt.

The EU is willing to support the Egyptian government's efforts to achieve economic growth. In this regard, the EU is committed to supporting an inclusive economic reform process that will enable Egypt to create sustainable growth and job creation. It is one of Egypt's key development partners. Ongoing bilateral commitments to Egypt amount to a total of EUR 1.14 billion. In addition, investments of over EUR 6 billion have been leveraged through different interventions backed by EU funding, to support key investment infrastructure projects in the transport, energy, environment (particularly water and sanitation), and social sectors, as well as private sector development.

EU assistance to Egypt under the European Neighbourhood Instrument for 2014-2016 (Single Support Framework, indicative amount of EUR 311 million) supports socio-economic sectors and civil society, focusing on three priority areas agreed with the Egyptian authorities: (1) Governance, transparency and business environment; (2) Poverty alleviation, local socio-economic development and social protection, and; (3) Quality of life and environment. Assistance for 2017-2020, will take into account the new Partnership defined together with Egypt under the revised European Neighbourhood Policy.

On 11 October 2016, Commissioner Hahn and Egyptian Minister of International\(^1\)
Cooperation, Dr Sahar Nasr, signed another EUR 129 million package of financial assistance in order to support Egypt's socio-economic development. The agreement focused on improving the quality of life of Egyptian citizens. Additionally, it included support at institutional level to on-going reforms in the energy and water sectors. This support is in line with priorities that the EU and Egypt are setting for their partnership in the coming years.

Relations between the EU and Egypt take place in the framework of the Association Agreement, which was revived in 2015. Cooperation in the field of migration and mobility has been included as one of the priorities in the current discussion on Partnership Priorities, a strategic document that constitutes the contractual basis for bilateral relations in the coming years, under the revised European Neighbourhood Policy. For the time being, there is no intention to resort to other frameworks of cooperation. The EUR 11.5 million programme from the Valletta Fund, the North Africa window, currently under consideration by the Egyptian side, is a first concrete step towards cooperation in the field of migration envisaged for the future.

4. The situation of refugees and migrants in Egypt

Available figures have confirmed a significant 40% increase in the number of departures from Egypt since the beginning of 2016. It is also remarkable that more and more Egyptians are among the migrants. Among those is an increased number of unaccompanied minors as Italy does not return this group of juveniles to their country of origin.

Despite the high number of refugees and migrants leaving Egypt via Alexandria, Libya remains by far the main country of departure in the Central Mediterranean, with around ten times the number of departures compared to Egypt. Taking into account the fluctuating nature of migration flows, it might be too early to draw definitive conclusions, but the EU continues to monitor the situation closely and is willing to engage more strongly with Egypt. In this spirit, DG HOME, DG NEAR and the EEAS have already sent staff to Cairo to support the respective entities in Egypt. However, according to the Minister of Social Solidarity, Ghada Wally, Egypt has not yet applied an inclusive migration strategy.

During their meetings with MEPs, Egyptian authorities underlined that Egypt is currently hosting 5 million refugees. However, according to the IOM and the UNHCR, approximately 1 million refugees are currently residing in Egypt, with 500,000 refugees officially registered by the UNHCR. The situation of refugees in Egypt is particularly worrying due to the high level of poverty, lack of access to healthcare, school dropout, lack of job opportunities and tough living conditions.

Despite its own tough economic situation, Egypt has, so far, not shown interest in starting a full migration and mobility dialogue as offered by the EU since 2011, similar to what the EU has developed with Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Lebanon. However, Egypt's active role...

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3 According to UNHCR, http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2540#ga=1.188083944.1108289451.1481277198
in the Khartoum process and in the (post) Valetta process has provided useful opportunities to enhance dialogue and cooperation on migration.

During their field visit to the EU co-funded Caritas Centre on 1 November 2016, MEPs acknowledged non-governmental organisations like Caritas as one of the key tools for refugees in Egypt due to the lack of a state migration programme. Caritas, which was entrusted by the UN High Commissioner to act as its main implementing partner in Egypt for the refugee programme since 1993, runs three offices in Cairo – the main one in garden city was visited by the delegation. Caritas covers the following primary domains: (1) registration of persons of concern, either refugees or Asylum seekers; (2) Social counselling which aims to determine the most vulnerable cases; (3) needs assessment and cash assistance (400-1300 EGY pounds) for all vulnerable categories e.g. elderly, minors, persons with disabilities and single parents; (4) Unaccompanied minors.

As of 1st January 2016, Caritas has registered approximately 62,000 refugees and asylum seekers, primarily Sudanese, South Sudanese, Somali, Iraqi, Ethiopians, Eritreans and Yemenis. Despite the fact that refugees enter through the South (Aswan), Caritas offices are only in the North of Egypt (Cairo). Caritas interlocutors underlined during their meeting with MEPs that due to budget cuts, with the implementation of the government’s reform programme the subsidized basic food commodities and basic life needs were significantly reduced. Consequently, the already limited financial resources of refugees and asylum seekers are even more targeted thus limiting if for other basic needs.

The EU should use all means to highlight the refugee’s budget shortcomings in Egypt, to continue supporting institutions working in this field, to mitigate the living conditions for refugees in Egypt and to call for partners to govern the cash referrals. UNHCR and Caritas should be praised for their work in Egypt.

5. Egypt at a time of regional security challenges

The security challenges faced by Egypt are enormous. Given the regional deterioration, the continued instability and fragile security situation in Egypt should be a priority for the EU, in order to prevent increased disorder which may unleash unpredictable consequences for both, the Middle East and Europe, given that Egypt is one of the main pillars of the area.

Egypt is situated in a very difficult neighborhood. To the west is the failed state of Libya; to the south is the unstable state of Sudan; on its own territory to the east, Egypt is contending with a burgeoning insurgency in northern Sinai, which borders the Gaza Strip controlled by Hamas, allied with the Muslim Brotherhood which was banned as a terrorist organization by President El-Sisi. In addition, Egypt has to face other rising terrorist organizations, notably ISIS.

During his meeting with MEPs on 2 November 2016, Foreign Minister Samheh Shoukry and Egyptian parliamentarians complained, in particular, about weapons flowing in from Libya. It was also stressed that border-security measures on the 1.115 km long Egyptian-Libyan frontier are of the utmost importance for the security of Egypt. The Foreign Minister clearly pointed out that Egypt supports the Libyan National Army under General Khalifa Haftar, who opposes the internationally recognized Tripoli-based Government of National Accord. He also
stressed that no other Arab country has played as powerful a role in Libya as Egypt. The relationship between the authorities in Tobruk and Egypt is not just defined by significant arms deliveries but also by a shared political project: eradicating political Islam, countering terrorist groups backed by Al Qaida ideology, and trying to enhance the autonomy of eastern Libya. For Egypt, having Cyrenaica – the eastern region of Libya – under the rule of a leader that is friendly to Egypt – General Khalifa Haftar - would create a buffer zone with the Islamic State Group.

Javier Nart, MEP, expressed his serious concern for the explosive situation in the South of Libya, which can export its instability to the centre, east and west of Africa - extremely fragile regions or already in war like CAR, Nigeria with Boko Haram or South Sudan - through the transport and smuggling of arms kept in an arsenal in the south of Libya. Egyptian interlocutors shared this concern, stating that it would seriously affect the overall stability of central and northern Africa.

In addition to its issues with Libya, the situation in the Sinai is also worrisome. Problems in the Sinai have long been underserved by subsequent Egyptian governments. The arrival of al-Qaeda, the Islamic State Group and the Muslim Brothers, who are using the Sinai as hinterland, as well as the breakdown of traditional tribal bonds, has only exacerbated the issue. With the absence of economic and educational opportunities, the Sinai will continue to prove fertile ground for jihadist recruitment. With Israel's permission, Egypt has now deployed thousands of troops, along with dozens of armored vehicles and tanks, into the Sinai to fight the insurgency: but Egypt’s heavy-handed military approach has not succeeded so far.

The EU should work with Egyptian authorities to prioritize the Sinai’s economic development, in order to counter further radicalization and extremism. Furthermore, Egypt’s domestic counterterrorism capabilities are likewise lacking. Egypt emerged from the 2011 revolution in a weakened state, and apparently still hasn’t fully recovered. It is therefore in the EU’s own interests to support Egypt by fostering closer cooperation in the fight against international terrorism.

As regards Egypt’s role in war-torn Syria, Egyptian Ministers repeatedly stated during their meetings with MEPs that the Egyptian government wanted to preserve the Syrian state and army, but they remained vague when voicing an opinion on the regime itself. In the same sense, Foreign Minister Shoukry stressed during the meeting on 2 November 2016: “We don’t like Bashar al Assad but we have to realize that he is still in power. First, we have to focus on stabilizing the Syrian institutions and on a political transition with Assad if we want to prevent a total chaos in Syria like the one in Iraq and Libya.”

The delegation expressed in particular its concerns about the security risks posed to Egypt by the expansion of the Islamic State in Libya and in Egypt, and the spill over effects of the Syrian civil war. MEPs praised Egypt’s participation in fighting the Islamic State in Libya and in Egypt, by supporting military operations, capacity building and training, and by stopping the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. They called for closer cooperation.

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in order to counter radicalisation, extremism and international terrorism.

6. Human rights situation

As expressed in several resolutions, the European Parliament is concerned about allegations of human rights abuses, enforced disappearances, and the closing of political space as signalled by the Egyptian criminal court decision on 17 September 2016 to freeze the personal assets of five of Egypt’s most prominent human rights defenders and organisations.¹

During all of their official meetings with President El-Sisi and Egyptian Ministers, MEPs expressed particular concerns about the deteriorating human rights situation in Egypt, mounting pressure on civil society and human rights organisations and defenders - through travel bans and asset freezes- and notably about the murder of Giulio Regeni and the arrest of Ibrahim Halawa. They emphasized that the Egyptian authorities should abide by the 2014 Constitution, specifically its provisions pertaining to human rights and the protection of fundamental freedoms, and emphasized that a strong civil society is the backbone of a pluralistic and democratic system.

During the meeting with President El-Sisi on 2 November 2016, discussions on human rights focused on the views that the European Parliament has expressed in 14 resolutions since 2011 on developments in Egypt, the human rights situation and the NGO law currently under preparation.

During the official meetings, Egyptian counterparts called on the EU to develop the necessary knowledge for a "deep understanding" of the Egyptian situation stressing that Egypt was not to be compared with Europe because the situation was very different. The Middle East is suffering from severe turbulence, from terrorism and migration, which impacts on the entire region. In the five years since the revolution, Egypt had gone a long way. A fair and balanced view on developments is therefore absolutely necessary.

Chair Marisa Matias stated during these meetings that the Egyptian interlocutors had "a point" since 14 resolutions might be too many and there were double-standards if the EU’s assessment of Egypt was compared with the EU's assessment of Turkey and Palestine. She stressed that there were also human rights problems in the EU itself - that said, human rights have no borders and the EU statements do not target Egypt, but the practices themselves.

The criminalisation of foreign funding targeting independent human rights groups who are critical of the government’s policy, was particularly raised by the MEPs during their meetings with the Minister of Social Solidarity, Ghada Wally on 31 October 2016 and with Minister of

¹ On 29 September 2016, the Egyptian Criminal Court issued a ruling freezing the assets and funds of human rights defenders and independent human rights organizations such as the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), the Hisham Mubarak Law Center (HMLC), and the Center for the Right to Education, including their respective Directors’ accounts.
MEPs were informed that the so-called “NGO law” is being drafted and shortly to be approved by the parliament. Any interference from the European Parliament was harshly refused by the Egyptian authorities.

The delegation also met with Egyptian human rights organisations in order to discuss the overall human rights situation, in particular cases of enforced disappearance. The situation was described as steadily deteriorating, as public space for discussions on fundamental rights and working conditions for trade unions are narrowing, while at the same time the pressure on human rights activists is increasing. MEPs pledged to closely follow up future developments in the human rights field in order to address the issue to their Egyptian interlocutors.

7. Dialogue with religious leaders

On 31 October 2016, the delegation met with the Grand Imam of Al Azhar Mosque, Dr Ahmed El Tayeb. The exchange of views focused on the inter-religious dialogue between Muslims and Christians and the presentation of the “House of the Egyptian Family” which was established by the Al Azhar Mosque in 2011. The Grand Imam pointed out that the ultimate goal of the House of the Egyptian Family was to preserve the Egyptian multi-religious identity, to restore Muslim and Christian supreme values, and to focus on common ground between Muslims and Christians.

MEPs and the Grand Imam entirely agreed that the prevention of extremism - a worldwide phenomenon and likewise a threat for the Arab countries and for Europe – is a priority and of utmost importance for both, Europe and Arab countries. MEPs expressed their interest in closer relations with Al Azhar. Mrs Ramona Manescu invited both, the Grand Imam and the Pope of the Coptic Church Towadros II, to Brussels to present the idea of the “House of the Egyptian Family” as an example of how to promote moderate Islam and tolerance. She also expressed her appreciation of the Al Azhar University for taking a leading role in fighting Islamic extremism.

A second meeting with Pope Tawadros II, Pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church took place on

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1 On 8 September, the Egyptian Cabinet approved a new draft NGO law retaining the restrictive provisions in the current NGO law (No. 84/2002). The draft law also limits NGO work to ‘development and social objectives’, and imposes a high level of minimum capital required to set up an NGO. Other new elements introduced by the draft law include the establishment of a specific tax for foreign funding, the banning of activists who have received a prison sentence for forming their own NGOs, and requiring the NGOs to conduct work that meet social needs.

2 On 14 November 2016, Egyptian legislators approved the bill regulating the work of non-government organizations (NGOs), a move that many human rights organizations believe will severely curtail their ability to work within the region. The 89-article bill requires that NGOs achieve compliance under the law within six months or face strict penalties. Some of the modifications include ensuring that “all data on financing sources, activities, protocols, and programs” is reported to the government. The legislation restricts the work of NGOs in areas pertaining to political parties, bans political work, requires prior permission to conduct fieldwork or public opinion surveys, and establishes a national body to regulate the work of foreign NGOs. Rights groups have harshly criticized the bill, which has yet to pass a final vote.
2 November 2016. The discussions focused on the overall worrying situation of Christians in the Middle East and in particular in Egypt. MEPs expressed their concerns about the growing harassment against Christians. The Pope underlined the close ties of his church with the government and expressed his hope that the new law on the construction of churches will allow for more tolerance towards Christians in Egypt.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

The delegation reiterates its strong support to the sovereignty, security and stability of Egypt. It acknowledges that Egypt urgently needs more support from the international community, including the EU, to help the country face its socio-economic and security challenges. The EU needs to continue to mobilize all of its cooperation instruments in support of Egypt. Within the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy, EU cooperation and Egypt’s involvement should be further enhanced, notably in the fields of:

- Security, including counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization;
- Capacity-building of the Egyptian administration, where specific solutions can sometimes be addressed more efficiently;
- Specific cooperation on asylum and migration policy: in cooperation with Egypt and the UNHCR, the EU and its Member States should look primarily to local and regional solutions to support Egypt to better cope with the refugees residing within its borders;
- Targeted support to vulnerable populations, including refugees;
- Targeted support on primary and secondary education: it is of vital importance to provide quality education to each child residing in Egypt, in order to ensure the future of the young generation.

At a time when it faces an acute crisis, the EU needs to express more political and diplomatic solidarity towards its Egyptian neighbour and partner. Notably, it should develop the necessary "deep understanding" of the Egyptian situation, as Egypt is not to be compared with Europe because the context is very different. The Middle East, in particular the Mashreq countries are suffering from severe turbulence, from terrorism and migration, which impacts on the entire region. In the five years since the revolution, Egypt has come a long way. A fair and balanced view on developments is needed. Given the acute security risks posed to Egypt by the expansion of ISIS/Daesh and other terrorist groups, and with the unavoidable spill-over effects of the wars in the region on Egypt, the international community should redouble its efforts to find a peaceful, inclusive political solution for the conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

On the other hand, dialogue with Egyptian partners should promote the idea that only a mindful democratic transition and respect for international conventions on human rights can bring about sustainable developments and stability. More specifically, some of the MEPs are of the opinion that human rights and democratic liberties, such as the right of expression or assembly, must be upheld and guaranteed in the country and cannot be affected, diminished or annulled by the fight against terrorism. The Egyptian government must ensure respect for those rights and liberties, as well as full respect for judicial independence.
PRESS STATEMENT

Cairo, 2 November 2016

EP Delegation encourages stronger ties between Egypt and the European Union

Six Members of the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with the Mashreq countries, headed by Marisa Matias (GUE/NGL), conducted a working visit to Cairo, Egypt, from 30 October to 3 November 2016 in the framework of the 11th Interparliamentary meeting between the European Parliament and the Egyptian Parliament. During its three-day visit, the Delegation held meetings with Speaker of the Egyptian Parliament H.E. Dr. Aly Abdel Aal and several Members of the Egyptian parliaments, including the heads of parliamentary committees on human rights, on foreign relations and on social affairs with a view to strengthen the Interparliamentary cooperation after a six years vacuum. The Delegation also took the opportunity to meet with its key interlocutors: President el-Sisi, H.E. Mr Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms Nabila Makram, Minister of Migration and Egyptians Abroad, Ms Saher El Nasr, Minister of International Cooperation, Ms Ghada Wally, Minister of Social Solidarity as well as with Ahmed Al Tayeb, Grand Iman of Al Azhar with, Pope Tawadros II, Pope of the Coptical Orthodox Church and representatives from civil society organisations. The objectives of the visit were mainly three-fold: observing the state of democratic transition in Egypt, identifying Egypt’s needs in terms of cooperation with the EU and Egypt’s role to increase stability and to solve crises such as in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya and Palestine.

Talks focussed on EU-Egyptian relations in order to strengthen the development of balanced political, economic and social relations between the Parties through dialogue and cooperation. The delegation addressed also the migration and refugee crises that greatly affected Syria’s direct neighbouring countries and, to a certain extent Egypt.

The Delegation was particularly concerned about the acute security risks posed to Egypt by the expansion of the Islamic State Group, Ansar al Sharia, Jabhat Fatah al Sham and other terrorist groups, and the spill over effects of the Syrian war. The delegation expressed its appreciation for Egypt’s efforts in countering international terrorism.

The Delegation stressed that a strong civil society is the backbone of a pluralistic and democratic system. Domestic and international Non-Governmental Organisations should be seen as partners in governance. Egyptian authorities informed the delegation that the NGO draft law is being prepared to be discussed in the Parliament.

The EP delegation

- underlines that Egypt is a close friend of the European Union and praises the good and extensive bilateral ties between them, which create enormous benefits for both sides;
- calls for a further deepening of EU-Egypt relations on the political, economic, cultural and societal level;
- in view of the serious security challenges that the Middle East and Europe are facing, underlines the need to step up cooperation in the fight against international terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism, and to address the root causes throughout the region; strategic communication, interfaith and civil society dialogue, as well as academic and cultural exchanges, play an important role in this;
• highlights that sustainability and stability will only be achieved if all stakeholders of the Egyptian society have their say in reshaping the new political order of the country;
• is alarmed by the recent court ruling in Egypt freezing the assets and funds of human rights defenders and independent human rights organizations, and calls upon the government of Egypt to comply with its constitutional and international obligations in relation to freedom of association and expression;
• in the framework of the many cases of enforced disappearances and concerns expressed by the European Parliament in specific cases such as Ibrahim Halawa and Giulio Regeni, welcomes the personal engagement the President expressed in the following up of the Regeni case;
• Supports the efforts made by the Egyptian authorities in tackling the enormous socio-economic challenges the country is facing, and endorses the EU Commitment on these matters.

The Delegation was composed of Mrs Marisa Matias (GUE/NGL) Chair of the Delegation, Mrs Ramona Manescu (EPP) Vice-Chair of the Delegation, Mr Gilles Pargneaux (S&D) Vice-Chair of the Delegation, Mr Andrea Cozzolino (S&D), Mr Francesc Gambus (EPP) and Mr Javier Nart (ALDE).
Delegation for relations with the Mashreq countries

FINAL PROGRAMME

DMAS

Working Group to

Egypt

30 October - 3 November 2016
### Monday 31 October 2016

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<tr>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Institution / purpose</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:00-10:00</td>
<td>Briefing by Mr Reinhold Brender, Chargé d'Affaires a.i.</td>
<td><strong>EUDEL CA room</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00-12:00</td>
<td>Meeting with Dr Ahmed El Tayeb, Grand Imam, Participants: DMAS + EU DEL</td>
<td><strong>Al Azhar Mosque, Salah Salem Road</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>12:30-13:30</td>
<td>Meeting with Ms Nabila Makram, Minister of Migration and Egyptians Abroad Participants: DMAS + EU DEL</td>
<td><strong>96 Ahmed Orabi street, 10th floor, Mohandeseen</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00-16:00</td>
<td>Lunch meeting with Key Partners Participants: DMAS + EUDEL</td>
<td><strong>Ritz Carlton Hotel, 1113 Corniche El Nile, Tahrir sq, Downtown</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>17:00-19:00</td>
<td>Meeting with Human Rights NGOs</td>
<td><strong>EUDEL CA room</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>19:30-22:00</td>
<td>Reception at the Ambassador's residence</td>
<td><strong>36 Mohamed Mazhar street, Zamalek</strong></td>
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### Tuesday 1 November 2016

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<tr>
<th>Timing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:30-11:00</td>
<td>Field visit to EU-funded project; Caritas Participants : DMAS + EU DEL</td>
<td><strong>Garden City</strong>&lt;br&gt;1 Mahmoud Sedki Khouloussy</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30-12:30</td>
<td>Meeting with Ms Saher El Nasr, Minister of International Cooperation Participants: DMAS + EU DEL</td>
<td><strong>8 Adly Street, Downtown</strong></td>
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<td>13:00-14:30</td>
<td>Lunch offered by the Ministry of Tourism</td>
<td><strong>Zeituna Restaurant, Four Seasons Hotel, 1089 Corniche El Nil</strong></td>
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<td>16:15-17:15</td>
<td>Meeting with Ms Ghada Wally, Minister of Social Solidarity Participants: DMAS + EU DEL</td>
<td><strong>19 Al Sheikh Al Maraghi street, Al Agouzah, Giza</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>18:00-20:00</td>
<td>Meeting with H.E. Dr Aly Abdel Aal, Speaker of Parliament, and Deputies, Mr Ahmad Said, Head of Foreign Relations Alaa Abed, Head of the Human Rights committee, and Dr. Abdel Hady el Kasby, Head of the Social Affairs committee Participants: DMAS + EU DEL</td>
<td><strong>House of Representatives: 1 Magles El Shaeb Street, Downtown</strong></td>
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<td>08:00-08:30</td>
<td>Breakfast meeting with Mr Hussein Gohar, International Secretary of the Egyptian Social Democratic Party</td>
<td>Fairmont Hotel, Nile City Towers, 2005 B, Corniche El Nil</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:30-11:00</td>
<td>Meeting with H.E. Mr. Abdel Fatah Al Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt</td>
<td>Presidential Palace, Heliopolis</td>
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<td>11:45-12:45</td>
<td>Meeting with Pope Tawadros II, Pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church</td>
<td>Mostashfa el Demerdash street, Abbassia</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:30-14:30</td>
<td>Working Lunch in preparation of the Press Release</td>
<td>Fairmont Hotel, Nile City Towers, 2005 B, Corniche El Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00-15:45</td>
<td>Meeting with H.E. Mr. Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Tahrir Palace, Tahrir Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:30-19:00</td>
<td>Media Round Table</td>
<td>EUDEL, Catherine Ashton Room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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