

EN
E-001793/2019
Answer given by Mr Avramopoulos
on behalf of the European Commission
(25.6.2019)

Libya has ratified the Search and Rescue (SAR) Convention (Hamburg 1979) and in December 2017 the Libyan Ports & Maritime Transport Authority notified the International Maritime Organisation of the Libyan Search and Rescue Region (SRR). In accordance with the SAR Convention this represents a unilateral declaration with a constitutive effect by a state in its area of sovereignty. The SAR Convention does not include any provision as regards the definition of safe countries.

The declaration of the Libyan SRR clearly defines the Libyan authorities as the primary authority responsible for co-ordinating responses to distress situations in the designated SRR. In the framework of Operation Sophia, EU support is focused on training and capacity building as well as enhanced monitoring of the Libyan coast guard to develop Libya's ability to take up responsibility in its sovereign waters in line with international standards. This support has significantly increased the Libyan coast guard's search and rescue activity, and cooperation has been consolidated between the Libyan Coast Guard, the International Organisation for Migration and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees at points of disembarkation for registration and initial screening. Through the joint Taskforce of the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations, work is done with the Libyan authorities to establish a standardised process with the aim to ensure migrants rescued by the Libyan coast guard are disembarked and taken to centres that meet international humanitarian standards, as well as a robust registration mechanism to ensure traceability.

The EU's priority has always been and continues to be to prevent people from risking their lives on dangerous journeys, as well as providing protection and support to vulnerable people along the migratory routes.