

SUB-COMMITTEE ON NAVIGATION,  
COMMUNICATIONS AND SEARCH AND  
RESCUE  
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**FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROVISION OF  
GLOBAL MARITIME SAR SERVICES**

**Libyan Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre Project**

**Submitted by Italy**

**SUMMARY**

*Executive summary:* This document provides information on the Libyan Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (LMRCC) Project, an initiative run by the Italian Coast Guard and funded by the European Commission, with the aim of conducting a feasibility study in order to establish a Libyan MRCC and to support the Libyan authorities in identifying and declaring their Search and Rescue Region, in accordance with international maritime laws and in cooperation with the neighbouring countries

*Strategic direction:* Other Work

*High-level action:*

*Output:* OW 28

*Action to be taken:* Paragraph 13

*Related documents:* None

**Introduction: Current migration flows in the Central Mediterranean Sea**

1 The emergency of migration from the coasts of North Africa continues in the Central Mediterranean Sea, considering the high numbers of arrivals, deaths at sea and lives saved in rescue operations. People smugglers and traffickers put migrants aboard old and overcrowded fishing boats, or even small rubber dinghies, with the risk of capsizing. These boats are generally equipped with small engines, insufficient navigation systems and often have insufficient fuel to navigate. For these reasons, the migratory events in the Central Mediterranean Sea almost always result in Search and Rescue (SAR) operations with the primary aim of saving lives at sea. Most SAR events happen close to, or sometimes within, Libyan territorial seas.

2 The Italian Coast Guard coordinates a high number of SAR events relating to the migration phenomenon, which in 2016 exceeded 1,400 cases. The 2017 trend continues to be extremely high: in the first nine months of the year, the total number of events was equal to the total for 2014 and 2015 together. Libya remains the main country of departure.

### **LMRCC Project: background**

3 On 29 July 2016, through a joint document, the EU Commission (DG Home) and European External Action Service (EEAS) identified all relevant policy areas, for the benefit of the Libyan authorities, in terms of capacity building and the coordinators to be involved in these activities.

4 As requested by the EU Commission and EEAS with a jointly signed letter sent on 4 August 2016, the Italian Coast Guard was instructed to assume responsibility for leading a project to establish a Libyan Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre and support the Libyan authorities in identifying and declaring their Search and Rescue Region.

5 Subsequently, during a meeting of the heads of State and government held in Malta on 3 February 2017, the EU support for capacity building in Libya was mentioned in the final communication "Joint Communication EC-EEAS", addressed to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council, and dated 25 January 2017. Following the EU requests, the Italian Coast Guard Commandant sent a project proposal (Grant Application Form) to the EU Commission (DG Home) with the aim of conducting a feasibility study related to the above mentioned targets.

6 On 12 June 2017 the EU Commission (Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs) notified the Italian Coast Guard of the award of the grant "Assessment of the Libyan Coast Guard legal framework and capability in terms of SAR Services". The Grant Agreement, signed on 22 June 2017, confirmed the Italian Coast Guard's commitment to implement the measures specified below.

### **Outcomes: assessment document and implementing phase.**

7 The activities must be carried out within a period not exceeding 12 months following the signing of the Grant Agreement (June 2018). By the above mentioned deadline, an assessment document and a detailed project description for the LMRCC should be submitted to the EU Commission for approval. In accordance with the outcomes of the assessment document, a second phase (implementing) should be carried out to establish a fully-fledged MRCC in Libya (communication network included) and to deliver training to Libyan personnel, in accordance with the relevant international laws.

### **Performed and planned activities**

8 Since the beginning of the project, the following activities have already been performed:

- appointment of a dedicated project team;
- setting up of a new network between the project team and:
  - Libyan counterparts: the Libyan Coast Guard (which is employed by the Libyan Ministry of Defence), the Ministry of Transport (Civil Aviation and Ports and Maritime Transports Authority), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Libyan Navy;

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- European stakeholders (EUDEL Libya, EUBAM Libya, Frontex, EMSA, EFCA, Seahorse, EUNAVFOR MED Op. Sophia);
  - UN stakeholders (UNSMIL, UNHCR, UNODC, IOM, WFP); and
  - the relevant Italian ministries (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defence).

9 It is important to point out that the project team has already held several meetings (in Italy, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Poland, Portugal and other countries) with the relevant EU and international stakeholders and the relevant Libyan authorities.

The following activities will be carried out in the near future:

- technical meetings, on a monthly basis, with the Libyan counterparts;
- a technical meeting that also involves Libya's certain neighbouring countries (Egypt, Tunisia, Malta and Greece), to be held in Rome in February 2018, with the aim of facilitating SAR agreements;
- a site survey in Tripoli of the buildings that could house the LMRCC and the communications facilities; and
- an International conference on Search and Rescue in the Central Mediterranean, to be held in Rome in the first half of 2018, with the Libyan authorities and Mediterranean countries.

In addition, the project team will:

- carry out an assessment of the Libyan legal framework relating to the maritime sector;
- carry out an assessment of the Libyan Coast Guard's SAR capabilities;
- support and assist the relevant Libyan authorities in identifying and declaring their Search and Rescue Region, in cooperation and coordination with a number of Libya's neighbouring countries (namely Tunisia, Egypt, Greece and Malta); and
- draw up a detailed project based on the assessment, aimed at establishing a fully operational Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre, providing assistance to the relevant Libyan authorities for the international recognition of their Search and Rescue Region.

### **Focus on Libyan Search and Rescue Region**

10 In July 2017, the President of Libyan Ports & Maritime Transport Authority informed the International Maritime Organization that the Libyan government considered the Tripoli Flight Information Region (as adopted by the International Civil Aviation Organization) to be identical to the Libyan Search and Rescue Region. On this basis, the project team carried out a technical analysis aimed at identifying the new Libyan Search and Rescue Region, as indicated in the following image. Considering the information relevant to this matter and taking account of some amendments provided by the relevant Libyan authority, it could be claimed that Libya declared its area of responsibility at sea with boundaries that coincide precisely with the maritime borders of its Flight Information Region.



- 1) 34° 20' N – 011° 30' E;
- 2) 34° 20' N – 015° 30' E;
- 3) 34° 20' N – 019° 00' E;
- 4) 34° 20' N – 023° 35' E;
- 5) 34° 00' N – 024° 10' E.

**Figure 1:** Libyan Search and Rescue Region

### **Complementary initiative**

11 Within the framework of a different comprehensive Italian project, which was led by the Ministry of the Interior and funded by the European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), plans have been made to support certain Libyan maritime agencies, namely the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG, which falls under the Ministry of Defence) and the General Agency for Coastal Security (GACS, under the Ministry of the Interior). The above mentioned project includes the following items of particular importance:

- delivery of equipment and naval assets;
- delivery of training to Libyan counterparts; and
- setting up a basic MRCC and a basic National Coordination Centre (for security and police).

The Italian Coast Guard is coordinating the aspects of this project that relate to SAR Services.

### **Conclusions (summary of the LMRCC Project)**

12 The Italian Coast Guard is playing a key role in strengthening the capacity of the relevant Libyan authorities in the area of Search and Rescue at sea. In particular, the assistance provided to the Libyan Authorities in setting up the MRCC and facilitating SAR agreements with Libya's neighbouring countries could, in the medium-long term, enhance the operational capacity of the competent Libyan authorities in carrying out maritime surveillance and tackling irregular border crossings, including the strengthening of SAR operations and related coast guard tasks aimed at decreasing the loss of life during migration flows.

### **Action requested of the Sub-Committee**

13 The Sub-Committee is invited to note the information provided.