

Tripoli, Libya, September 17 (Infosplusgabon) - Colonel Mabrouk Abdelhafid, head of the agency to Combat Illegal Immigration in Libya, Monday urged African countries to help Libya stem the phenomenon.

In a statement to the 5th African Forum on Migration held in Cairo, Colonel Abdelhafidh said the number of illegal migrants inside Libyan territory was 700,000, while 7,000 others were in migrant shelters.

He therefore called on "African Union countries to support the Libyan state in dealing with these migrants, not just those inside the shelters", pleading for "solutions and plans to address them".

A statement by the Ministry of the Interior of the government of national unity said "the Libyan State suffers from the phenomenon of illegal immigration as a transit country for migrants and not as a destination country", warning that "Libya is currently working through the African Union to combat this phenomenon".

"The sovereignty of the Libyan State and local law to combat migration is the decisive factor in the Libyan State's treatment of migrants and organized crime," it added.

The statement stressed that the Libyan authorities faced many difficulties in managing the case against trafficking gangs and trafficking in persons and illegal migrants.

As a country of both transit and a destination for illegal immigration, Libya has experienced a significant flow of migrants in recent years, encouraged by the insecurity that has prevailed in the country for more than eight years, exacerbated by the military escalation that took place near Tripoli on 4 April last.

Due to the deteriorating living conditions of migrants, the Libyan authorities, in collaboration with UN organisations, have decided to close illegal migrant accommodation centres and find a new alternative to managing the illegal immigration issue.

The Forum discussed data and statistics on migration and sustainable management in programmes at the national, regional and continental levels and opened a dialogue on how to develop and improve the collection and use of accurate and comprehensive migration data and statistics for the African continent.

It also discussed the strengthening of migration data management and research to develop and implement evidence-based policies for effective migration management in Africa.

The forum again called for the establishment of a continental working group on migration statistics to assist African Union member-states and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in promoting migration statistics, joint action and cooperation on migration and the movement of people on the continent.

At the end of the forum, which was attended by several ministers of labour, rehabilitation and migration issues from various African Union countries, a report was adopted calling for a mechanism to ensure its continuity and contribution to strengthening African countries' efforts to implement their commitments.

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