

Rwanda is holding discussions with several European countries over a possible “emergency transit mechanism” for migrants, although no agreement has been reached, government spokesperson Yolande Makolo has said.

Makolo, responding to a question from Royal FM about reports of a possible migration agreement with Italy, said Rwanda was in discussions with European countries but had not signed any deal.

“There is no agreement yet,” Makolo said.

She said the discussions were focused on Rwanda’s broader experience and approach to migration, including the possibility of providing temporary accommodation for people stranded or facing danger.

Rwanda could provide “a safe place for families who are stranded, have nowhere else to go or are in danger for various reasons,” Makolo said.

Under the proposed approach, those hosted in Rwanda could either return to their countries of origin or seek asylum and potentially be resettled in another country.

Makolo later confirmed to AFP that Rwanda had held “some initial discussions with some European countries but nothing has been decided.”

Rwanda’s growing role in migration policy

The discussions come as European countries face renewed pressure over migration and border controls.

They also revive memories of Rwanda’s controversial migration agreement with the United Kingdom under the former Conservative government.

Under that deal, Britain planned to send people who had entered the country through irregular routes to Rwanda for processing and potential resettlement.

The policy was scrapped after the Labour government came to power, bringing an end to a programme that had become one of the most controversial aspects of Britain’s migration policy.

Rwanda subsequently lost a \$135-million legal court challenge linked to the cancellation of the agreement.

Rwanda has also agreed to receive some migrants deported from the United States. Human Rights Watch has reported that the arrangement involved financial support to Rwanda, although the terms and amount should be clearly attributed when reported.

Europe tightens migration rules

The latest discussions come amid renewed debate in Europe over migration and border controls.

European lawmakers recently approved tougher migration measures, including provisions allowing countries to establish “return hubs” outside the European Union for people who do not have the right to remain.

The issue has gained fresh political attention following scenes of large numbers of migrants crossing from Morocco into Spain’s North African enclave of Ceuta.

Although many of those who crossed subsequently returned to Morocco, the incident prompted renewed calls from right-wing European politicians for tighter border controls.

For Rwanda, the emerging talks could further expand its role in Europe’s migration policy, following its previous agreement with Britain and its separate arrangement with the United States.

However, Makolo’s comments make clear that, at least for now, Rwanda has not reached a new agreement with Italy or any other European country.

The government says discussions remain at an initial stage.