



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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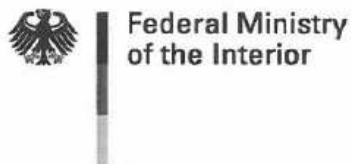
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NOTE

From: Ministers of Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and Sweden
To: Acting President of the Justice and Home Affairs Council
Subject: Asylum and migration issues

Delegations will find attached a copy of a letter from the ministers of Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and Sweden to the acting President of the Justice and Home Affairs Council.



27 May 2014

His Excellency Mr Nikolaos Dendias
Minister of Public Order & Citizen Protection
President of the European Council
for Justice and Home Affairs
4th P. Kanellopoulou St.
10177, Athens
Greece

Dear colleague,

The number of asylum seekers to the European Union is continuously on the rise. In 2013, there was an increase of 40 % and almost 435 000 applications were lodged. This upward trend of people seeking protection in Europe is likely to continue during the coming years. With the trend of an ever growing number of arrivals in the Mediterranean and the increasing number of asylum seekers in relatively few

Member States, it is apparent that the challenges ahead is a common European challenge, requiring a common European solution.

The continuing loss of human lives in the Mediterranean calls for forceful actions. It is clear that many of the challenges related to migration that the European Union is facing today, such as trafficking in human beings and smuggling of people, must be addressed in a comprehensive way and in broad cooperation with third countries. A joined up policy approach foreseeing effective coordination and cooperation structures is required in negotiations with third countries (e.g. trade, development and other relevant policy areas), to ensure that partnership, including a "more for more" approach, on migration is sufficiently prioritized and built into third countries and regional dialogues.

The EU need to focus on a coordinated and consistent follow-up of the Task Force Mediterranean, including on the implementation of the Africa-EU declaration on migration and mobility, adopted at the Africa-EU summit in April this year. Given the very instable security and political situation and the limited institutional and administrative capacities, the situation in Libya, the main transit and departure country of mixed migration flows in the central Mediterranean, needs to be addressed, preferably also through the active engagement in countries neighbouring Libya.

At the same time, the need for Member States to effectively implement and apply the Common European Asylum System should remain a priority for the EU. In order to cope with the increasing migratory pressure that a growing number of Member States currently are experiencing, it is also central that the European Union and the Member States have an efficient contingency planning in place.

It is however also important to recall that most of those fleeing conflicts and violence in their home countries do not arrive in the EU, but remain in their neighbouring countries. It is not only financial, economic and technical support that those host countries need. Responsibility sharing can also be done by offering resettlement. Resettlement does not only provide protection response in the context of emergencies, but also comprises an important part of a much broader effort to share the responsibility and demonstrate solidarity with host countries. Therefore it is important that all EU Member States join UNHCR's resettlement work. It could be necessary to act quickly. In the absence of resettlement offers, refugees look for alternative solutions elsewhere, turning to smuggling, trafficking and non-seaworthy boats. We would therefore like to welcome further active discussion on how all Member States can join resettlement efforts and develop effective and meaningful responses to potential challenges that may arise.

Syria, the Horn of Africa, Afghanistan and other parts of the world will continue to be places of unrest, which in turn will make people leave. Against this background it is important for the European Union to keep this issue high on the agenda, preferably through the efficient coordination of the Commission in close cooperation with the

present and incoming presidencies in order to ensure consistent and strategic discussion within the Council with a view to offering political guidelines and priorities. We need to make sure to act in a consistent way and to apply a "whole of government approach"!

Yours sincerely



Tobias Billström
Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy,
Sweden



Dr. Thomas de Maizière
Federal Minister of Interior, Germany



Johanna Mikl-Leitner
Federal Minister of the Interior, Austria



Karen Hækkerup
Minister of Justice, Denmark



Fred Teeven
Minister for Immigration, The Netherlands