



Jean-Claude JUNCKER
President

Frans TIMMERMANS
First Vice-President

Dimitris Avramopoulos
Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs
and Citizenship

Brussels, 25 JUL. 2017

Dear Prime Minister,

For several years now, Italy has been at the forefront in managing migration along the Central Mediterranean. In line with its tradition of solidarity and its culture of respect for human rights, Italy has received several thousands of migrants and refugees arriving on its coasts, offering them protection and assistance. The Italian navy, coast guard and police forces have spared no energy or efforts to save lives at sea, rescuing thousands of children, women and men when they embarked on perilous journeys at sea. Italy has also been active in addressing the root causes of migration and promoting efforts in partnership with Libya to control the flows and better protect migrants and internally displaced people in Libya.

In doing so, Italy has taken a significant burden on its shoulders to respond to a phenomenon which is of a clear European dimension. The Commission has always believed that Italy, like other Member States with an external border, cannot be left alone and should benefit from the solidarity of the EU and its Member States.

The European Union has been providing support in various forms, from the EU maritime operations at sea, Joint Operation Triton and Operation Sophia, to the EU's relocation programme launched with the two Council Decisions of 2015. So far, 7,873 refugees have been relocated from Italy to other Member States.

The Commission has mobilised funding to Italy for about €626 million in long-term EU funding for migration and security (2014-2020) and €150 million in emergency funding, coordinated through the European Border and Coast Guard return operations from Italy to the countries of origin of migrants, made available experts from EU Agencies to help make the relocation scheme work, proposed and implemented migration related projects in countries of origin and transit through the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. Recently, the Commission initiated an Action Plan to support Italy and increase solidarity, which was endorsed by all EU Ministers of Interior at their informal meeting in Tallinn on 7 July.

As the current situation in the Central Mediterranean and the intensity of the flows continue to require constant vigilance, we would like to reaffirm the Commission's determination to stand by Italy in these challenging times and respond promptly to any solidarity requests that the Government may formulate in the weeks to come.

On. Dr. Paolo Gentiloni
President of the Council of Ministers of Italy
Palazzo Chigi, Roma



*To ensure a constant chain of communication between Italy and the Commission over the Summer, we have decided to set up a **permanent contact team** in the European Commission, led by Paraskevi Michou, Deputy Secretary-General of the Commission, Simon Mordue, Deputy Director-General of the Directorate General for Migration and Internal Security of the Commission and Stefano Grassi, member of the Cabinet of President Juncker (functional mailbox: [REDACTED] phone number [REDACTED]).*

The Commission's contact team will ensure a permanent flow of information with the Italian authorities and rapid operational response from the Commission services. It will report directly to President Jean Claude Juncker, First Vice-President Frans Timmermans and the EU Migration Commissioner, Dimitris Avramopoulos.

In particular, the Commission stands ready to decide, if the Italian Government considers it useful, complementary actions such as:

- Mobilise additional emergency funding under the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of up to €100 million for measures needed to implement the Minniti Law, and especially to accelerate the asylum and return processing, to assist local authorities and communities hosting migrants and to support integration;*
- Measures to accelerate, in cooperation with the Italian authorities, the pace of relocations under the two existing Council Decisions in order to ensure that all those eligible for relocation who arrived in Italy before the 26 of September 2017 will be relocated;*
- Step up support from the European Border and Coast Guard to ensure faster return procedures by deploying up to 500 experts available under the return pools and additional funding to cover the costs of more return operations;*
- Ask the European Asylum Support Office to make available up to 40 additional experts to facilitate and speed up the examination of asylum applications, in particular to ensure a rapid assessment of those which are manifestly unfounded;*
- Organise an operational workshop jointly with the Italian authorities and the International Organisation for Migration to examine ways to improve the effectiveness of the return process;*
- Step up Assisted Voluntary Returns, by mobilising additional EU funding and technical assistance.*

In parallel, the Commission stands ready to engage with North African countries, and in particular Libya, to ensure follow up to the 2nd Ministerial Conference of the Contact Group on the Central Mediterranean held in Tunis on 24 July, to which the EU Migration Commissioner, Dimitris Avramopoulos, participated.

In this context, we welcome that the €46 million project prepared jointly by Italy and the Commission for border and migration management measures in Libya will be adopted by the Operational Committee of the EU Trust Fund for Africa already this week.

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Furthermore, we will intensify our efforts to reach an effective arrangement with Bangladesh to speed up the readmission of migrants irregularly present in Italy, including by proposing to the Council the use of visa leverage, if appropriate.

Let us conclude by recalling that it is imperative that progress is made in the coming months in the negotiations on the proposals to reform the Common European Asylum System and revise the Dublin Regulation. It is only in the context of an effective common asylum system that it will be possible to alleviate in a structural way the pressure on Member States that are most affected because of their geographical position or the circumstances of the moment. The Commission will press ahead to reach a balanced compromise based on both solidarity and responsibility that is in the interest of Italy and the whole European Union.

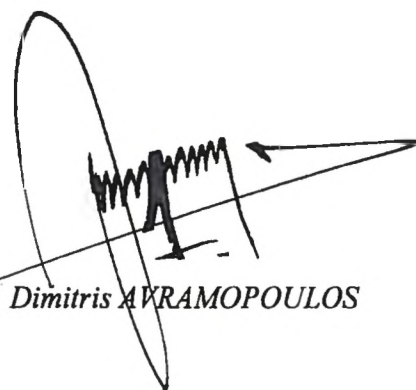
We stand ready to work further alongside Italy, in a spirit of European solidarity, in order to address the current pressing challenges in the Central Mediterranean and build a fairer and more effective European asylum and migration policy.



Jean-Claude JUNCKER



Frans TIMMERMANS



Dimitris AVRAMOPOULOS