

Brussels, 19 OCT. 2010  
C/2010/7194

Dear President,

*The Commission would like to express its gratitude with respect to the favourable opinion expressed by the Italian Senate on the proposal of the Commission amending the Decision No 573/2007/EC establishing the European Refugee Fund for the period 2008 to 2013 as part of the General programme "Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows" and repealing Council Decision 2004/904/EC {COM(2009)456}.*

*The aim of this proposal is to amend the Decision establishing the European Refugee Fund in the light of the establishment of a Joint EU Resettlement Programme. This proposal and the Communication on the establishment of a Joint EU Resettlement Programme are part of the European Union's efforts to establish a Joint EU Resettlement Programme.*

*As referred to in the opinion of the third Permanent Committee of the Italian Parliament, the Policy Plan on Asylum {COM(2008)360}, which was adopted on 17 June 2008, provided for strengthened cooperation with UNHCR to ensure improved protection of asylum seekers outside the EU, as one of the measures to complete the establishment of the Common European Asylum System. Strengthened cooperation with UNHCR is one of the components of the current proposal for the establishment of a Joint EU Resettlement Programme.*

*As also stated in the opinion of the third Permanent Committee, as well as in the opinion of the fourteenth Permanent Committee of the Italian Senate, the Commission considers that a distinction should be made between the resettlement of refugees outside the EU to an EU Member State and intra-EU transfer of beneficiaries of international protection. These issues require both an adequate response. As stated in its 2008 Policy Plan on Asylum, a higher degree of solidarity and responsibility-sharing among Member States as well as between the EU and third countries is one of the pillars of the Commission's strategy for the development of the Common European Asylum System. Since then, the Commission has actively pursued a solidarity-driven agenda through a variety of initiatives, such as a more targeted use of the European Refugee Fund, including through emergency funding; the inclusion in the European Asylum Support Office of a clear mandate to support Member States faced with particular pressures, for instance through the organisation of asylum expert teams; and the amendment to the Dublin Regulation in order to introduce the*

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*possibility to temporary suspend transfers of asylum-seekers when such transfers would put too much pressure on the asylum system of a receiving Member State.*

*The Commission has also actively promoted the intra-EU transfer of beneficiaries of international protection to decrease the burden carried by some Member States – this has led to the ongoing implementation of a pilot project with Malta for the relocation of 250 such persons. Finally, the Commission has launched a study on the implications of relocation as an EU burden-sharing mechanism.*

*The Commission is committed to assessing which are the most feasible and fair solutions for the long term and will present in 2011 a Communication on enhanced intra-EU solidarity in the area of asylum. This Communication will take into account the outcome of the relocation pilot project and the results of the study mentioned above, as well as other relevant elements.*

*The Commission shares the opinion of the Italian Senate that the current proposal for the establishment of a Joint EU Resettlement Programme constitutes a first step towards the establishment of a further developed Programme and that this should be part of more comprehensive policies of providing assistance to third countries.*

*The Commission shares the hope that the Italian government will take steps to participate in the Joint EU Resettlement Programme.*

*Yours faithfully,*