



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The European Commission would like to thank the Senato della Repubblica for its Opinion on the proposal for a Directive on consular protection for citizens {COM(2011) 881 final} of the Union abroad and apologises for the delay in replying.

The Commission takes note of the comments made on different points of the proposal and welcomes the Senate's overall support regarding the provisions on cases of ordinary consular protection. The Commission shares the view that the proposed Directive is a response to the need to ensure that unrepresented Union citizens can benefit from consular protection by the consular authorities of other Member States and that this need has become even clearer following recent crises such as the events in Libya or after the earthquake in Japan.

The Commission would like to emphasize that, as underlined by Vice-President Reding in her speech of 29 March 2012 before the Italian Parliament, the proposed Directive provides for clearer and simpler consular protection between Member States' authorities. The proposal takes into account in a balanced and pragmatic manner the contributions received during the consultation phase, which included a public consultation and many stakeholders' meetings.

Concerning your comment on financial burden-sharing and the costs incurred by the Member States providing assistance, the Commission would like to stress that the proposal simplifies the current procedures on financial reimbursement to ensure that, where appropriate, Member States providing assistance can be reimbursed more easily and efficiently. Clearer rules and simpler ways of cooperating would not bring about new costs but, on the contrary, give rise to savings. In times of financial constraints common synergies need to be exploited, for instance by financing costly evacuations in case of crisis under the civil protection mechanism, as foreseen by the Directive.

As regards your comment on rules on crisis cooperation, which you consider too detailed, the Commission acknowledges that every crisis is different and that rules on crisis cooperation need to be flexible. This is why the proposed Directive confines itself to the essential minimum in this respect. The provision on crisis cooperation, building

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on the current guidelines on consular cooperation, ensures that contingency planning includes unrepresented Union citizens and that in case of crisis Member States inform each other in a timely manner about available evacuation capacities. As repeatedly advocated by several Member States, the proposal also allows for consular officials to join existing multinational crisis teams. In addition, a specific provision aims at promoting the concept of the so-called "Lead State", a Member State in charge of coordinating and taking action in case of crisis for citizens of the Union.

I look forward to continuing our political dialogue, also in view of Italy's wide consular network and its considerable tradition in this field.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*