

# Europe – the continent of solidarity: Joint Statement on the occasion of International Migrant Day

On the occasion of International Migrant Day on 18 December, Frans **Timmermans**, First Vice-President of the Commission, Federica **Mogherini**, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Neven **Mimica**, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Christos **Stylianides**, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, and Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, made the following statement:

*“On International Migrant Day, we remember all those who live outside their county of birth and are on the move – either by choice or forcibly. We remember that our own continent, Europe, is built on migration. Our common history is marked by millions of people fleeing from persecution, war or dictatorship – looking only 100 years back. Today, our European Union allows people across the continent to freely travel, to study and work in other countries. This has made Europe one of the richest places in the world – in terms of culture, of economy, of opportunities and in terms of liberties. But this day is also an occasion to remember those who have left their homes, in the face of conflict, political oppression, poverty or lack of hope, and who struggle to build a new and decent life elsewhere. While for some, migration is a positive and empowering experience, too many others have to endure human rights violations, xenophobia, exploitation and unacceptable living conditions along their journeys.*

*Protecting and upholding the fundamental rights and freedoms of all migrants, regardless of their status, has always been and will always be our priority. This is at the heart of our European Agenda on Migration. We are working relentlessly, inside and outside the European Union, in close cooperation with our Member States and our international partners to save lives, provide protection, offer safe and legal pathways for migration and tackle the root causes that force people to leave their homes in first place, as well as fight the criminal networks that often take advantage of people’s despair.*

*We have a shared responsibility towards people on the move and we need to act on a global scale to support them and to uphold the safety, dignity and human rights of migrants and refugees. It requires the engagement and the consistent implementation of international agreements by all.*

*Europe is committed to remaining the continent of solidarity, tolerance and openness, embracing its share of global responsibility. And for those who we have recently welcomed to Europe, we want the same as we want for all*

*Europeans, namely to prosper and flourish and contribute to a better future for our continent.*

*We strongly support the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and will continue to actively work towards the adoption of the UN Global Compacts on Migration and on Refugees at the United Nations."*

## **Background**

Over the past 20 years, the European Union has put in place some of the highest common asylum standards in the world. And in the past two years, European migration policy has advanced in leaps and bounds with the European Agenda on Migration proposed by the Juncker Commission in May 2015. Progressively, a more united approach to dealing with migration is emerging, internally and externally.

Internally, work has been intensified on the reform of the Common European Asylum System to put in place a more effective and fair approach, based on solidarity and responsibility, alongside continuous support to the Member States most exposed and reinforced cooperation with partner countries.

The European Union has also stepped up its efforts to protect vulnerable groups, in particular children who are among the most exposed of migrants, including through new Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child and [recommendations](#) on the protection of children in migration.

Externally, the EU has progressively put in place a genuine external dimension of its migration policy, complementing and reinforcing its actions within the Union. The 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development recognises the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development. It also recognises that both challenges and opportunities of migration must be addressed through coherent and comprehensive responses.

Along the migratory routes, we are working to save people's lives with our international partners, such as the UN agencies. We are fighting the criminal networks involved in migrant smuggling and in trafficking in human beings, through our Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations on the ground and by supporting regional initiatives, such as the G5 Sahel Joint Force. We are also conducting search and rescue operations at sea, with the support of the European Border and Coast Guard and EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia. These efforts help to save thousands of lives every month.

The EU also works on opening up safe and legal pathways through resettlement – to allow those in need of protection to come to Europe without having to risk their lives in the desert and at sea. An ambitious target for the resettlement of 50,000 persons in need of international protection was set by President Juncker in September 2017. A particular focus should be put on resettlement from North Africa and the Horn of Africa, notably **Libya, Egypt, Niger, Sudan, Chad and Ethiopia**, whilst ensuring continued resettlement

from **Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon.**

We also continue, jointly with our UN and civil society partners on the ground, to support concrete actions in Libya and along the migratory routes, to ensure the respect of human rights, improve migrants' living conditions and assist migrants and refugees, who too often become victims of smuggling and trafficking networks. The establishment of a joint Task Force between the African Union, the United Nations and the EU, is an important step that will help to accelerate our joint work. In concrete terms, actions will aim to evacuate those in need of international protection to Europe, accelerate the assisted voluntary returns to countries of origin for those stranded in Libya, as well as intensify our efforts to dismantle criminal networks.

#### **For More Information**

[Joint African Union-European Union-United Nations Task Force to Address the Migrant Situation in Libya](#)

[2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#)

[Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the protection of children in migration](#)

[EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child](#)