

Statement by Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides on the deadly forest fires in Portugal

All our thoughts are with the families and friends of those affected by the deadly forest fires that have struck several parts of Portugal.

We express our condolences to those that have lost loved ones.

The EU is fully ready to help. All will be done to assist the authorities and people of Portugal at this time of need.

In an immediate response to a request for assistance by the Portuguese authorities, the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism has been activated to provide firefighting aircraft.

Immediately, France has offered three planes through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and they will be quickly sent to assist the local emergency efforts. In addition, Spain has also sent aircraft on a bilateral basis.

We commend the bravery of the firefighters and emergency services on the scene risking their own lives to save others.

The European Commission's Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), which monitors natural disasters 24/7, is in constant contact with the national civil protection authorities.

The EU's emergency centre has sent a liaison officer to Portugal and will coordinate the delivery of support and any further requests.

Highlights of the 24th EASO Management Board meeting, 13-14 June 2017

On 13-14 June 2017, EASO held its 24th Management Board meeting at the Agency's headquarters in Malta.

EASO's Executive Director and Management Team updated the members of the Management Board on progress of work achieved in the implementation of the Agency's Annual Work Programme and the situation of Asylum in the EU+ 2016.

Highlights from the 24th EASO Management Board Meeting by Jose Carreira, EASO Executive Director

Among main topics discussed included recent developments such as the EASO Asylum Intervention Pool System, new training modules and the development of support tools to enhance operational support activities on the ground and in particular in Italy and in Greece.

In view of the negotiations on the draft proposal for Regulation on the European Union Agency for Asylum and the repealing Regulation, EASO also briefed the Management Board on its internal preparations in view of the implementation of the European Union Agency for Asylum, which is currently discussed by the co-legislators.

On situation of Asylum in the EU+, Mr. Ward Lutin, Head of EASO's Information and Analysis Unit commented that the increased number of asylum decisions at first instance in 2016 was a "record year". This lead to a decrease on the number of backlog cases. As also reported during the MB meeting Germany, Italy, France and Greece were some of the main receiving countries of asylum applicants in the last 12 months.

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Mamdouh's testimony, successfully relocated from Greece to Lithuania

Mamdouh studies Pharmacy in Lithuania, he is a Syrian successfully relocated from Greece, who found in this Baltic country a second home and new friends. He learnt to smile again, to dream again, to hope again in this incredible place, peaceful with friendly people.

Mamdouh was helped by the authorities from the very first moment he stepped on Lithuanian soil, and he considers the EU Relocation Programme the only safe and legal way for all the people in need in international protection, currently residing in Greece and Italy.

His story, his words, his smile depict the journey from darkness to light.

Share his testimony!

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Joint EU-U.S. press statement

following the EU-U.S. Justice and

On 16 June 2017, the EU – U.S. Ministerial Meeting on Justice and Home Affairs took place in Malta. The meeting reaffirmed the strong and historical bonds of partnership between the United States of America and the European Union, and the commitment to continue working closely together in the areas of Justice and Home Affairs.

The European Union, hosting the meeting in Valletta, was represented by the Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos, the Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality Věra Jourová, the Union Security Commissioner, Julian King, by the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Gilles de Kerchove and by Malta's Minister of Home Affairs and National Security, Michael Farrugia and Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government, Owen Bonnici, on behalf of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The United States of America was represented by U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions and by Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Elaine C. Duke.

The European Union and United States of America underlined the critical importance of their cooperation in the area of Justice and Home Affairs and the need to sustain and deepen cooperation while facing shared security challenges, for the benefit of the security of citizens on both sides of the Atlantic.

The European Union and the United States of America discussed their common efforts to fight terrorism. The discussion focused specifically on working together to address the issue of foreign terrorist fighters through improved information sharing, and addressing the challenge of radicalization, particularly on the internet, as well as the role of anti-money laundering legislation in tackling terrorist financing. The two sides also exchanged views and took stock of recent European Union actions in the areas of migration, border management and its role in ensuring internal security.

The discussion further covered the implementation of the U.S.-EU Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty and the question of access by law enforcement authorities to electronic evidence.

Both sides welcomed the entry into force of the EU-U.S. Data Protection "Umbrella" Agreement and reiterated their commitment to ensure its full implementation.

The European Union and the United States of America also discussed the threats from terrorism to aviation security and working together to raise global aviation security standards to protect passengers.

The European Union and the United States of America agreed on the importance of advancing towards reciprocal visa free travel under their respective legal frameworks. Both sides endorsed a cooperative approach to assisting Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Poland and Romania in advancing more rapidly towards the fulfillment of the requirements for designation in the U.S. Visa Waiver Program, consistent with U.S. law.

The sides reaffirmed the need to step up joint work on cybersecurity and cybercrime in all its dimensions including with the private sector. They also agreed to continue the good cooperation on fighting illicit drugs and to consider joint efforts on fighting smuggling and trafficking of migrants.

Reiterating the progress made and the need to face global challenges together, the European Union and the United States of America remain committed to reinforce their partnership and meet again in the second half of 2017 in Washington.

EU signs the Istanbul Convention

Violence against women is rooted in the unequal power relations between women and men and reflects one of the strongest expressions of gender inequality. In this context the European Institute for Gender Equality has been strongly supporting the EU and the Member States in their efforts to eradicate violence against women since the very start of its activities seven years ago. *“The elimination of violence against women involves challenging the unequal division of social, political, and economic power among women and men, and the ways in which this inequality is perpetuated through institutions at all levels of society”* says Virginija Langbakk, EIGE’s Director.

The signing of the [Istanbul Convention](#) by Commissioner Věra Jourová on 13 June 2017 on the basis of two decisions adopted by the Council on 11 May 2017 is therefore an extremely important step in establishing the first legally binding instrument dedicated to combating violence against women. Calling as it does for a regular monitoring of State efforts and policy initiatives and the designing of more effective strategies.

The Chairwoman of EIGE’s Management Board, Prof. Dr Kalliope Agapiou-Josephides, highlighted the importance of the signing by Commissioner Věra Jourová of the Council of Europe Convention (Istanbul Convention) on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and underlined EIGE’s commitment to take all necessary actions to fulfil its role in this respect.

Photo (C): Council of Europe