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MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

MIGRATION, HOME AFFAIRS  
AND CITIZENSHIP

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HUMANITARIAN AID  
AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

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Dear Members,

In your letter of 14 August 2015, you request the activation of the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism to cope with the current migration crisis, which is indeed one of the most important immediate challenges Europe is facing.

As long as there is instability in some of the neighbouring countries, the European Union will be faced with increased numbers of refugees and asylum seekers that will look for a better future. The experience of the past few months shows that the systems of the Member States which are facing unprecedented numbers of arrivals are overwhelmed.

There is no simple or single answer to the challenges posed by migration – but our response can only be European. This is why migration has been a priority for this Commission, and its President, since the outset.

The European Agenda on Migration, adopted in May, sets out the Commission's strategy to address the migratory challenges that Europe currently faces. It includes a set of immediate actions to respond to the need for swift and determined action in response to the human tragedy. But more needs to be done in terms of responsibility sharing among Member States so as to create capacities for rapid and effective management of migratory flows.

The Commission is ready to mobilise all the instruments and resources available at EU level to address the situation and support the frontline Member States.

As you rightly stress, one such instrument is the European Civil Protection Mechanism, which is the expression of EU solidarity at its core. In our joint letter of 9 June 2015 also with Commissioner Andriukaitis, we already drew the attention of the Member States to the possibility of using this Mechanism, in particular to cover the health care needs of migrants. In the past, the Mechanism was activated by Bulgaria and Hungary when requesting assistance in migration management.

However, on the basis of the relevant applicable rules, the Mechanism can only be activated by a **specific request** by the concerned Member State. It is only following such a request that the Commission's Emergency Response Coordination Centre can actively coordinate the mobilisation and deployment of assistance. The transport of in-kind assistance provided in the framework of the Mechanism can also be financially supported by the Commission.

While we have both personally been in continuous contact and discussed the situation with the Greek authorities, at this stage **no such request** – beyond those mentioned above – has been forthcoming. The Commission stands ready to coordinate once a request has been received and has via its Emergency Response Coordination Centre already been in contact with Member States, who could be ready to assist upon a possible activation.

Due to the fact that the civil protection mechanism depends on voluntary contributions of Member States and by its very nature only provides support for short periods of time, its role can only be complementary to other instruments that have already been deployed.

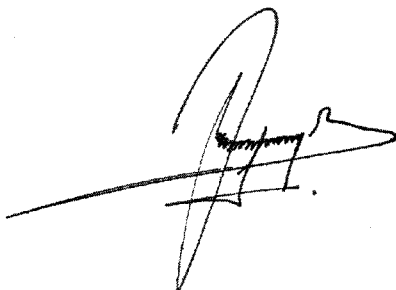
Emergency funding is granted to frontline Member States. €34.1 million have already been awarded from the 2014 and 2015 budgets and there is €41 million still available in the emergency reserve of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. For instance, the Commission is currently fast tracking the Greek request for €2.74 million in emergency funding under the Internal Security Fund to support the first reception response delivered by UNHCR to newly arrived migrants on the Aegean islands.

Furthermore, the Commission is a leading international donor for refugees with over €1 billion of humanitarian assistance dedicated to refugees and internally displaced people since the beginning of 2014, in main countries of origin. Specifically since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the EU and its Member States have mobilised €3,8 billion in humanitarian, development, economic and stabilisation funding to assist Syrians within their country and in the region (Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq). The Commission has also provided humanitarian assistance to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in their quest to deal with the increased arrivals on their territory.

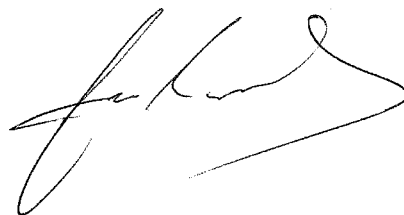
It is indeed clear that there are vast humanitarian needs in the host countries receiving the refugees, and we want to pay tribute to those countries including Member States of the EU that keep their borders open and accommodate refugees fleeing life threatening situations. While the EU has at its disposal important funds to cope with the plight of refugees, the situation inside the EU is different since humanitarian assistance is mainly considered a national responsibility.

In addition to these short-term measures, we firmly believe that we need to work together with countries of origin and transit to find ways of tackling the root causes of migration. To do so, we need to build solid and comprehensive partnerships with third countries and help their citizens become economic contributors. Only in this way, can we treat the causes of migration.

Sincerely,



Dimitris AVRAMOPOULOS



Christos STYLIANIDES