

Joint NGO statement ahead of the European Council of 28-29 June 2016
NGOs strongly condemn new EU policies to contain migration

At the upcoming European Council, European Union (EU) leaders will discuss the **European Commission's Communication on a new Partnership Framework with third countries**. The Communication proposes an approach which aims to leverage existing EU and Member States' external cooperation instruments and tools in order to stem migration to Europe. The undersigned organisations express their grave concern about the direction the EU is taking by making deterrence and return the main objective of the Union's relationship with third countries. More broadly, this new Partnership Framework risks cementing a shift towards a foreign policy that serves one single objective, to curb migration, at the expense of European credibility and leverage in defence of fundamental values and human rights.

The proposed approach is inspired by the EU-Turkey deal which although touted as a successful example of cooperation, has actually left thousands people stranded in Greece in inhumane and degrading conditions. This has particularly affected children, with the result that hundreds of unaccompanied children have been held in closed detention facilities on the islands or forced to sleep in police cells on the Greek mainland. **The wider repercussions of this should not be underestimated. It is hard to see how Europe can ask partner countries to keep their doors open, to host large-scale refugee populations and prevent further movements while at the same time Member States refuse to shoulder their fair share of responsibility for protecting people who flee their homes.** The right to asylum is being significantly undermined, and it will become more and more challenging for civilians in conflict zones to seek international protection.

The Commission's proposal ignores all the evidence on the ineffectiveness of deterrence strategies aimed at stopping migration. **This approach will not only fail to "break the business-model" of smugglers but increase human suffering as people are forced into taking more dangerous routes. Moreover, despite the stated commitment to respect the principle of *non-refoulement*, there are no safeguards envisaged to ensure that human rights, rule of law standards and protection mechanisms are in place. As a result, people risk being deported to countries where their rights are not safeguarded.** Responsibility and liability for human rights violations do not end at Europe's borders.

We are disappointed to see that once again the emphasis on deterrence leaves no clear commitments to open up safe and regular channels to Europe for those in need of international protection and for other migrants, e.g. through resettlement, humanitarian admission schemes, family reunification, educational visas, labour mobility and visa liberalisation. Resettlement, labour migration and visa liberalisation are only mentioned as possible leverage with partner countries in a quid pro quo approach.

Another major concern is the financing of the proposed Partnership Framework which would represent a wholesale re-orientation of Europe's development programming towards stopping migration. This is an unacceptable contradiction to the commitment to use development cooperation with the aim to eradicate poverty, as enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty. **Aid is for the**

benefit of people in need, and should not be used as a leverage for migration control. EU funding should be transparent and adhere to clearly established principles, such as the Busan principles on effectiveness and the Paris principles of ownership by and alignment to partner countries' strategies. In addition, striking 'migration management' agreements with countries where grave human rights violations are committed will be counter-productive in the longer term – undermining human rights around the globe and perpetuating the cycle of abuse and repression that causes people to flee.

Migration has many drivers; people may be on the move in search of new livelihood opportunities, an education or to reunite with family, while conflict and violence, human rights violations, climate change, poverty and unemployment can all trigger migration and forced displacement. **Any cooperation to manage migration should take into consideration this complex and multi-faceted reality, be evidence and needs-based, and ensure that the benefits of migration are maximised and the risks are mitigated.**

If the EU wants to call for more global solidarity, it needs to set the right example. The EU, a project built on the rubble of a devastating war, is about to embark on a dark chapter of its history. We urge EU leaders to choose a rights-based system to manage migration, based on a viable long-term strategic vision, rather than pursuing an unattainable and inhumane deterrence objective and thereby abandoning its core founding principles.

As human rights, humanitarian, medical, migration and development agencies, and key implementing partners of development programmes in third countries, we call on European leaders to:

1. Reject the current Commission Communication and develop a sustainable long-term and evidence-based strategy for migration management, in consultation with civil society and experts.
2. Facilitate safe mobility by opening and strengthening safe and regular channels to Europe both for those in need of international protection and other migrants including through resettlement, humanitarian admission and humanitarian visas, family reunification, worker mobility across skill levels and student visas. Member States must commit to clear benchmarks and appropriate timelines for implementing a migration framework that meets the needs of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees, their families, as well as the needs and obligations of Member States.
3. Exclude any conditionality based on migration control indicators in the allocation of development aid to third countries. Development aid is a tool to fight poverty and inequality, not to manage migration. Vulnerable populations should not be punished because of concerns that are largely political.
4. Stop any readmissions or removals of people by the EU to a third country that violate – or risk violating - fundamental rights and rule of law, including the principle of *non-refoulement*. Ensure access to protection, justice and effective remedy for all people in migration and asylum procedures.
5. Ensure transparency in the development of any instruments to manage migration and accountability for human rights violations resulting from EU migration policies.

6. Commit to a foreign policy and action focused on preventing and unlocking protracted crises. While the Communication mentions the need to address root causes of displacement in the long term, it does not include engagement to prevent and manage crises.

Signatories

1. 11.11.11
2. ACT Alliance EU
3. Action Contre la Faim (ACF)
4. ActionAid
5. Aditus Foundation
6. Afrique Culture Maroc
7. Agir Ensemble pour les Droits de l'Homme
8. Aid Services
9. Amnesty International
10. Amycos
11. Andalucía Acoge
12. Asamblea de Cooperacion Por la Paz ACPP
13. Asgi - Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione
14. Asociacion por ti mujer
15. Asociacion Salud y Familia - Spain
16. Association for action against violence and trafficking in human beings-Open Gate La Strada Macedonia
17. Association for the Social Support of Youth
18. Ayuda en Acción
19. Bienvenidos Refugiados España
20. British Refugee Council
21. CAFOD
22. Care International
23. Caritas International Belgium
24. CCOO de Andalucía
25. Centre for Youths Integrated Development
26. Centro de Investigaciones en Derechos Humanos PRO IGUAL
27. ChildFund Alliance
28. Church of Sweden
29. Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
30. Citizens' association for combating trafficking in human beings and all forms of gender-based violence
31. CNCD-11.11.11
32. Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado – CEAR
33. Concern Worldwide
34. CONCORD Europe
35. CONCORD Sweden
36. Conseil des Béninois de France
37. Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations in the Czech Republic
38. Coordinadora Andaluza de ONGD

39. Coordinadora Cantabra de ONGD
40. Coordinadora de Barrios
41. Coordinadora de ONGD de la Región de Murcia
42. Coordinadora de ONGD del Principado de Asturias
43. Coordinadora de ONGD España
44. Coordinadora de ONGD Navarra
45. Coordinadora Extremeña de ONGD
46. Coordinadora Gallega de ONGD
47. Coordinadora ONGD de Castilla y León
48. Coordinadora Valenciana de ONGD
49. Coordination des ONG pour les droits d'enfant
50. Cordaid
51. Detention Action
52. Detention Forum
53. Doctors of the World International network
54. EMERGENCY ONG ONLUS
55. EU-CORD Network
56. Eurochild
57. EuroMed Rights
58. European Association for the Defence of Human Rights
59. European Council on Refugees and Exiles
60. European Youth Forum
61. Federación Aragonesa de ONGD
62. Federación de Asociaciones de Derechos Humanos
63. Federation of Christian NGOs in Italy
64. FIACAT
65. FIDH
66. FIZ advocacy and support for migrant women and victims of trafficking
67. Flüchtlingsrat Niedersachsen e.V.
68. Forum des Organisations de Solidarité Internationale issues des Migrations
69. Fundacion 1º de Mayo de Comisiones Obreras
70. Fundación Alianza por los Derechos, la Igualdad y la Solidaridad Internacional –APS-
71. Greek Forum of Refugees
72. Habitat for Humanity International, Europe, Middle East and Africa
73. Handicap International
74. Hellenic Platform for Development
75. Human Rights Watch
76. Human Rights Without Frontiers
77. Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries
78. Inspiraction
79. Instituto Sindical de Cooperación al Desarrollo – ISCOD
80. InteRed
81. INTERSOS
82. Islamic Relief UK
83. Jesuit Refugee Service Europe
84. Justice and Peace Netherlands

85. KISA-Action for Equality, Support, Antiracism
86. Koordinierungsstelle der Österreichischen Bischofskonferenz für internationale Entwicklung und Mission
87. La Strada International
88. Lafede.cat - Organitzacions per a la Justícia Global
89. Le Monde des Possibles
90. Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum
91. Macedonian Young Lawyers Association
92. Médecins Sans Frontières
93. Menedék - Hungarian Association for Migrants
94. Migrant Voice UK
95. Migrants' Rights Network
96. Movimiento contra la Intolerancia
97. Movimiento por la Paz – MPDL
98. Nasc, the Irish Immigrant Support Centre
99. Norwegian Refugee Council
100. Oxfam
101. PAX
102. Pax Christi International
103. PICUM-Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
104. Plan International EU office
105. Platform Minors in exile / Plate-forme Mineurs en exil / Platform Kinderen op de vlucht (Belgium)
106. PRO ASYL
107. Red Acoge
108. Refugee Aid Serbia
109. Réseau de Compétences Solidaires - Groupement d'Economie Sociale et Solidaire France - Europe - Afrique
110. Réseau Immigration Développement Démocratie - IDD
111. Save the Children
112. SOS Children's Villages International
113. SOS Racisme – Touche pas à mon pote
114. Stichting LOS
115. Swedish Refugee Advice Centre
116. Télécoms Sans Frontières
117. Terre des Hommes International Federation
118. The International Federation of Social Workers European Region
119. The International Rehabilitation Council for Torture victims
120. The Norwegian Centre Against Racism
121. Translators without Borders
122. Trócaire
123. World Vision Brussels and EU Representation
124. ZOA