



PRESS RELEASE

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Seville Summit: Blocking Access to Europe is not the Answer

The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)¹ calls on European leaders gathering in Seville later this week to show strong political leadership, stand by their human rights commitments and ensure access to Europe for people in need of protection. Peer Baneke, the General Secretary of ECRE said **"access is at the core of refugee protection. Without the possibility of access to the territory, the right to seek asylum is meaningless. Ever stricter control measures have not only obstructed the right of asylum seekers to access the territory of Europe but have also forced people to resort to illegal entry and rely on criminal networks.** As a result, the phenomenon of people smuggling and trafficking at Europe's land and coastal borders has thrived fuelling public insecurity and mistrust in the ability of European governments to control their borders."

"Political will, courage and determination are needed to foster public confidence in Europe's capacity to shape and manage a coherent asylum and immigration policy. We believe that the answer to public fears does not lie in the constant tightening of control measures but in a comprehensive and principled approach that is based on a thorough understanding of the asylum and migration phenomenon in Europe. The EU must live up to the commitments of the 1999 Tampere Summit to 'respect & the absolute right to seek asylum' and provide 'guarantees to those who seek protection in or access to the European Union'. **We strongly urge European governments to develop a coherent strategy that includes the establishment of a principled and fair common European asylum system; a commitment to global responsibility sharing; active engagement in the root causes of forced displacement; and a common immigration policy**".

¹ Representing the refugee assisting non-governmental community in twenty-four European countries
A forum of non-governmental organisations in Europe Un forum d'organisations non-gouvernementales en Europe

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ECRE calls on all Heads of EU governments and in particular Prime Minister Aznar as the Chair of the Seville EU Summit:

1. To demonstrate the necessary political leadership to rebuild the asylum system;
2. To incorporate fundamental safeguards consistent with international and refugee law standards into border control measures that enable access to European territory to present their asylum claims;
3. To significantly increase the European governments' participation in programs without prejudice to the right of spontaneous arrivals to seek and receive asylum on the territory of Europe;
4. To ensure that a harmonized European approach to protection for persons fleeing persecution forms part of a co-ordinated strategy, which addresses the causes of forced displacement and provides aid to countries hosting large numbers of refugees.

Peer Baneke and other ECRE representatives will be present at the Seville Summit and can be contacted on:

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