

## **Reception of Iraqi refugees – Conclusions**

(JHA Council, July 2008)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The situation in Iraq has major humanitarian consequences: some 4,7 million Iraqis have been uprooted; the number of persons displaced within the country is today estimated by the UNHCR at over 2,7 million; according to the same source, some 2 million Iraqis are living in neighbouring States.

2. Against this background, the Council would refer to its conclusions of 26 and 27 May 2008, in which it expressed concern at the plight of displaced Iraqis inside Iraq and Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries, in particular in Jordan and Syria. As stated at the Expanded Ministerial Conferences of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq, the Government of Iraq and the international community have the obligation to protect and assist Iraqis displaced within their country and in neighbouring countries, by addressing their immediate and foreseeable needs and ensuring their safety.

The Council again urges the Iraqi Government to use its resources to help neighbouring countries cope with the additional burden of refugees and points out that it has undertaken to provide further contributions to assist in alleviating the humanitarian situation of those concerned.

The Council notes that, since 2006, Community financial support for refugees, returnees and displaced people within the country, including humanitarian aid and aid for development with a view to arriving at sustainable solutions, has amounted to EUR 86,48 million.

3. The Council reaffirms that the main objective is to create the conditions to enable displaced persons inside Iraq and refugees in neighbouring countries to return safely to their homes, ensuring that the human rights of all Iraqis are protected and safeguarded and focusing particular attention on vulnerable groups.

4. The Council notes that some Member States are already taking in Iraqi refugees, particularly under their national resettlement programmes. It considers it necessary to continue in this respect contacts with the Iraqi authorities, and with the UNHCR, in order to agree on the most appropriate forms of solidarity with all Iraqis.

It agrees to return to the question at its next session in the light of these contacts.

5. The Council would point to the potential for financing refugee resettlement under Decision No 573/2007/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Refugee Fund for the period 2008 to 2013.

6. Lastly, the Council welcomes the presentation by the Commission on 17 June 2008 of the policy plan on asylum, under which the Commission intends to submit proposals in 2009 for the development of a Community resettlement programme in which Member States could take part on a voluntary basis."