



Joint Declaration On the Support to Greece for the development of the hotspot/relocation scheme as well as for developing asylum reception capacity

Brussels, 14 December 2015

On the Support to Greece for the development of the hotspot/relocation scheme as well as for developing asylum reception capacity

By the **European Commission**, represented by Vice President Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, and;

By the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**, represented by Assistant High Commissioner for Operations Mr. George Okoth-Obbo;

In cooperation with the **Greek authorities**, represented by the Alternate Minister of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction responsible for Migration Policy, Mr. Ioannis Mouzalas

CONTEXT:

According to UNHCR data, in the first 11 months of 2015, over 1.565.000 refugees and migrants have made their way to Europe, a trend which is set to continue. Greece is one of the EU Member States most impacted by this unprecedented flow as it has received, until 10 December 2015, more than 790.000 nationals of third countries arriving by sea. According to UNHCR, 92% of the inflow is originating from the top 10 refugee producing countries.

In response the European Commission has presented a European Agenda on Migration in May 2015 setting out a comprehensive approach to migration management and has introduced a number of additional important measures, including the adoption of two emergency schemes to relocate 160,000 people in clear need of international protection from the Member States most affected to other EU Member States.

On 23 September, the European Commission detailed a set of priority actions to implement the European Agenda on Migration, which was endorsed by the informal meeting of Heads of State and Government of 23 September 2015. The priority actions, to be implemented within six months, include two key operational measures: implementing the "hotspot" approach and rolling out the relocation scheme.

An essential element for the implementation of the measures in question is the increase of the asylum reception capacity. In the Leaders' statement, following the Leaders' Meeting on refugee flows along the Western Balkans Route (EU Leaders' Statement), of 25 October 2015, the leaders welcomed Greece's intention to increase reception capacity to 30.000 places by the end of the year and committed to supporting Greece and UNHCR to provide rent subsidies and host family programmes for at least 20.000 reception places.

The Commission and UNHCR will work closely with the Greek authorities to support them in implementing the measures above.

NATURE OF SUPPORT:

The European Commission intends to sign a Delegation Agreement with UNHCR, providing the necessary funding for UNHCR to support Greece in the development of the hotspot/relocation scheme as well as for developing its asylum reception capacity. In doing so, UNHCR will cooperate closely with the European Commission, EU agencies, in particular the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX), as well as with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Infrastructural support to the Greek government for the establishment of the "hotspots" at Lesbos, Samos, Leros, Chios and Kos

The Greek authorities have committed to create "hotspots" for the registration and first reception of new arrivals in 5 island locations in Greece (Lesvos, Kos, Leros, Chios, Samos). The total number of first reception places at the "hotspots" is estimated at around 7,000 (of which the location for 6,300

has been identified).

UNHCR has already supported the Greek government in the improvement/upgrading of existing facilities on some of the islands. While the construction works at the "hotspots" are undertaken by the Greek authorities, under the intended Delegation Agreement, UNHCR would support the establishment of the hotspots with advice by UNHCR staff on plans, with acquiring necessary supplies and with autonomous construction works as necessary.

Support to the relocation scheme

As per EU Council Decisions of 14 and 22 September 2015, 66,400 asylum seekers are to be relocated from Greece to EU MS until 26 September 2017 (art. 13 of EU Council Decision 2015/1601/22.9.2015). The relocation scheme will be implemented by the Greek asylum service under the overall supervision of the Alternate Minister responsible for Migration Policy.

Under the intended Delegation Agreement, UNHCR would support the implementation of the relocation scheme in the following ways:

- a) Through the provision of information to new arrivals concerning the relocation scheme, the provision of interpretation services, as well as the provision of information material available in different languages;
- b) Through the identification of asylum seekers to be relocated, as well as their referral, as appropriate, in close cooperation with the Asylum Service. A team of 43 affiliate workforce will be deployed to the 5 hotspot locations and in Athens;
- c) Through the establishment of 20.000 reception places in the form of an apartment rental scheme, hotel vouchers and host family programmes, as an important precondition to making the emergency relocation system work. On 30 November 2015 UNHCR published a call for expression of interest to identify the partners for the implementation of the 20.000 reception places and will take a decision as regards the choice of implementing partners by 17 December. UNHCR has already made available 500 places to ensure that all relocation candidates have access to accommodation during the relocation process and has the capacity to increase the reception places as needed, depending on the number of relocation applicants.

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