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From:	Austrian delegation
To:	Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA)
Subject:	EU resettlement initiative – “Save Lives” - Discussion paper

Background

1. The last years have been marked by an increasing political instability in the immediate neighbourhood of the European Union, particularly in North Africa and the Middle East. The Syria conflict, the advance of IS in Iraq and the war between rivaling factions in Libya have caused humanitarian catastrophes of enormous proportions, affecting the whole region and also seriously endanger the stability of the neighbouring countries. The various armed conflicts as well as social and political upheavals in the region are causing permanent mixed migration flows and pose a serious test to the Union’s migration and asylum policies. While being the major gateway to Europe for thousands of migrants, the Mediterranean has become an area of human tragedies and loss of lives. The desperate situation of migrants is exploited by unscrupulous traffickers, whose only interest lies in maximising their profits. At the same time refugees in need of international protection clearly lack possibilities to legally enter the European Union safely.

2. In reaction to the tragic events off the coast of Lampedusa, the European Commission presented on 4 December 2013 its report on the work of the Task Force Mediterranean, containing a set of immediate measures for a short term response to the on-going humanitarian crisis (COM(2013) 869 final). The communication underlines that “resettlement is an important mean by which persons in need of protection can arrive safely to the European Union without going on hazardous journeys over the Mediterranean”. The Commission further encouraged Member States to “increase their current commitment on resettlement as a long-term solution that contributes to preventing and addressing protracted refugee situations”.
3. The communication from the European Commission has been broadly welcomed by delegations from Member States. On 19/20 December 2013, the European Council reiterated in its conclusions on the Commission communication “the importance it attaches to resettlement for persons in need of protection and to contributing to global efforts in this field” (EUCO 217/13).
4. In preparation of the informal JHA Council on 8/9 July 2014, the Italian Presidency presented a discussion paper in order to determine priorities for the implementation of the communication on the work of the Task Force Mediterranean. In connection with the establishment of a revamped Regional Protection Programme for North Africa, the paper also asks for a wider engagement and a more strategic use of resettlement by the Member States, in agreement with UNCHR. This approach was confirmed in a joint working document from the Italian Presidency and the European Commission, urging to “strengthen the overall EU contribution to the global commitment to Resettlement by increasing the quota of resettlement places offered by the EU MSs and by ensuring that more MSs participate in the effort” (ST11436/14).

5. As stated in the document 9280/1/14 of the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator on “Foreign fighters and returnees from a counter-terrorism perspective, in particular with regard to Syria: state of play and proposals for future work”, foreign fighters remain a major threat to the European Union and its Member States, as well as to the MENA region. Syria continues to attract growing numbers of foreign fighters, including from Europe. Given that many foreign fighters are motivated by perceptions of international community indifference to the conflict in Syria, a stronger humanitarian commitment of the Union would further promote the significant role that the EU and Member States are playing in the international humanitarian relief effort. Moreover, refugees would be more easily prevented from being exposed to radicalization and recruitment in refugee camps.
6. In its strategic guidelines for legislative and operational planning for the coming years within the area of freedom, security and justice adopted on 26/27 June 2014, the European Council calls for an increase of “contributions to global resettlement efforts, notably in view of the current protracted crisis in Syria” (EUCO 79/14, I, paragraph 8).
7. At the occasion of the informal JHA Council in July 2014, Austria joined the call for an urgent reaction to the on-going humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean and proposed the implementation of a common European resettlement program in cooperation with UNHCR. As a follow up, an open letter with further details on the proposed initiative was sent to the Italian presidency, the Commission and all Member States.
8. Bearing in mind the general consensus on the importance of a “more targeted and strategic use of resettlement as a main protected avenue for possible beneficiaries of international protection” (ST11436/14) and based on the Austrian initiative at the informal JHA Council in Milano in July 2014, the present discussion paper provides some facts and figures of the current situation in the Member States when it comes to reception of asylum seekers and persons who have been resettled. The extent of the current humanitarian catastrophes and the figures provided by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)¹ in the annex clearly show the need for a true EU resettlement programme based on a solidary and equitable contribution of all EU MS.

¹ Figures provided by ICMPD through its Member States Programme on Asylum

Possible framework for a humanitarian EU initiative on resettlement

9. The goal of the initiative is to offer a legal and safe possibility to enter the European Union for refugees in need of international protection. The initiative should, thus, concentrate on particularly vulnerable people and members of persecuted minorities and religious groups. In order to avoid additional pull factors in the Mediterranean, the initiative should ideally address the situation immediately in the region of origin. It is therefore important to identify the priority regions taking into account the current migratory flows. This could in the long term also contribute to a better migration management by preventing migratory movements from the beginning and thereby reduce the migratory pressure on Member States.
10. The initiative should be based on the principle of solidarity and demonstrate a common European commitment to resettlement. An orderly and well-organised immigration of persons in need of international protection can have positive side effects on Member States and on the European Union as a whole. In this sense, the initiative should be implemented with the support and participation of all Member States, taking into account existing efforts in this respect.
11. In order to guarantee a successful implementation, the initiative should be implemented in close cooperation with a reliable and independent partner with long lasting experience in the field of resettlement. For many years, UNHCR has proved to be such a reliable partner in the implementation of resettlement programs, disposing of already existing networks and a well-established infrastructure.
12. The first pillar of the “Save Lives” initiative would be the assessment and pre-selection of possible participants in the initiative directly in the region of origin. This task would be performed by UNHCR, according to criteria developed in cooperation with Member States, including adequate medical checks. The second pillar would be the reception of the candidates by Member States after a thorough security check. The elaboration of a well defined distribution key based on relevant indicators – including current pressures and strains – should be taken into account in order to guarantee an equal and solidary burden sharing.

13. The present initiative should be complemented by accompanying measures according to the catalogue developed by the Task Force Mediterranean and should be in line with the actions contained in the EU Action on Migratory pressures (Roadmap). The facilitation of legal entry for refugees in need of international protection must go hand in hand with measures for combating illegal immigration, such as a reinforced protection of external borders and an effective return policy. Moreover, capacity building activities in countries of origin and transit are of key importance. Reception in Member States must be complemented by well-designed integration programs. These programs should also contain measures to prevent and combat radicalization and recruitment.

14. One of the urgent measures called for by the IT Presidency in its Non Paper for Coreper is a credible resettlement policy. In order to initiate concrete EU wide action in this field, AT proposes to entrust the European Commission with the elaboration of a pilot project based on the elements set out in this paper. This project should ideally attract all EU MS and work on establishing a fair and solidary distribution key based on objective criteria.

I. Distribution – Status Quo (EU 28, Asylum Applications in 2013)

In 2013, according to Eurostat data, 435.390 applications for international protection were lodged in EU 28. The applications were distributed among the Member States in the following way:

Table 6: Distribution of asylum applications (EU 28)							
asylum applications (2013)				asylum applications (mean 2009-2013)			
		De facto share	Numbers			De facto share	Numbers
1	Germany	29,17%	126.995	1	Germany	21,08%	67.923
2	France	15,22%	66.265	2	France	17,72%	57.081
3	Sweden	12,49%	54.365	3	Sweden	11,44%	36.844
4	United Kingdom	6,92%	30.110	4	United Kingdom	8,82%	28.401
5	Italy	6,11%	26.620	5	Belgium	8,15%	26.257
6	Belgium	4,87%	21.215	6	Italy	6,96%	22.409
7	Hungary	4,34%	18.900	7	Austria	4,74%	15.260
8	Austria	4,02%	17.520	8	Netherlands	4,72%	15.220
9	Netherlands	3,94%	17.160	9	Greece	3,31%	10.662
10	Poland	3,50%	15.245	10	Poland	3,11%	10.005
11	Greece	1,89%	8.225	11	Hungary	1,83%	5.905
12	Denmark	1,66%	7.230	12	Denmark	1,62%	5.233
13	Bulgaria	1,64%	7.145	13	Finland	1,16%	3.737
14	Spain	1,03%	4.495	14	Spain	1,01%	3.246
15	Finland	0,74%	3.220	15	Bulgaria	0,70%	2.260
16	Malta	0,52%	2.245	16	Cyprus	0,67%	2.147
17	Romania	0,34%	1.495	17	Malta	0,54%	1.755
18	Cyprus	0,29%	1.255	18	Ireland	0,48%	1.559
19	Croatia	0,25%	1.080	19	Romania	0,47%	1.515
20	Luxembourg	0,25%	1.070	20	Luxembourg	0,41%	1.310
21	Ireland	0,21%	920	21	Czech Republic	0,26%	851
22	Czech Republic	0,16%	710	22	Croatia	0,22%	706
23	Portugal	0,12%	505	23	Slovakia	0,19%	604
24	Slovakia	0,10%	440	24	Lithuania	0,16%	503
25	Lithuania	0,09%	400	25	Slovenia	0,09%	276
26	Slovenia	0,06%	270	26	Portugal	0,09%	275
27	Latvia	0,04%	195	27	Latvia	0,05%	173
28	Estonia	0,02%	95	28	Estonia	0,02%	62
	Total	100,00%	435.390		Total	100,00%	322.179

Sources: Eurostat (2014a): Asylum and new asylum applicants - annual aggregated data; own calculations

II. Comparison of Quota Following Different Distribution Models (in %)

The following table lists all distribution key models in an overview (the lowest values for each country marked green, the highest in red):

	SWP Model ²	German Proposal 1994 ³	German Model (Königsberg) ⁴	Austrian Model (per population) ⁵	% of EU 28 GDP	Asylum Applications in % (mean 2009-2013)	ERF distribution quota
Austria	2,45%	1,96%	2,10%	1,66%	2,35%	4,74%	5,65%
Belgium	2,46%	1,92%	2,70%	2,17%	2,90%	8,15%	4,39%
Bulgaria	1,27%	1,41%	0,70%	1,46%	0,30%	0,70%	0,82%
Croatia	0,94%	0,82%	0,50%	0,85%	0,35%	0,22%	
Cyprus	0,55%	0,17%	0,10%	0,17%	0,14%	0,67%	2,01%
Czech Republic	1,94%	1,68%	1,50%	2,08%	1,19%	0,26%	1,24%
Denmark	1,74%	1,32%	1,60%	1,10%	1,90%	1,62%	
Estonia	0,50%	0,47%	0,20%	0,26%	0,13%	0,02%	0,59%
Finland	2,14%	3,37%	1,30%	1,07%	1,47%	1,16%	2,59%
France	13,11%	13,66%	14,70%	12,87%	15,77%	17,72%	11,73%
Germany	15,80%	14,89%	19,10%	16,22%	20,47%	21,08%	11,61%
Greece	2,09%	2,27%	1,70%	2,21%	1,66%	3,31%	4,33%
Hungary	1,60%	1,61%	1,20%	1,98%	0,77%	1,83%	1,22%
Ireland	1,28%	1,25%	1,10%	0,90%	1,29%	0,48%	2,04%
Italy	10,78%	10,29%	12,00%	11,75%	12,38%	6,96%	6,52%
Latvia	0,57%	0,67%	0,20%	0,41%	0,16%	0,05%	0,60%
Lithuania	0,72%	0,77%	0,40%	0,61%	0,24%	0,16%	0,67%
Luxembourg	0,76%	0,16%	0,30%	0,10%	0,33%	0,41%	0,60%
Malta	0,50%	0,05%	0,10%	0,08%	0,05%	0,54%	1,23%
Netherlands	3,98%	2,95%	4,20%	3,30%	4,71%	4,72%	4,57%
Poland	5,19%	5,81%	4,50%	7,60%	2,87%	3,11%	2,82%
Portugal	1,83%	1,83%	1,50%	2,09%	1,34%	0,09%	0,54%
Romania	3,06%	3,45%	2,10%	4,00%	1,03%	0,47%	0,80%
Slovakia	0,98%	0,90%	0,70%	1,07%	0,54%	0,19%	1,25%
Slovenia	0,74%	0,38%	0,30%	0,41%	0,28%	0,09%	0,72%
Spain	8,30%	9,60%	8,30%	9,23%	8,27%	1,01%	1,85%
Sweden	3,22%	4,96%	2,70%	1,86%	2,94%	11,44%	17,64%
United Kingdom	11,54%	10,69%	14,10%	12,48%	14,16%	8,82%	11,96%

² The SWP (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik) model considers the economic strength (weighted at 40%), the size of population (weighted at 40%), the geographic area (weighted at 10%) and the unemployment rate (weighted at 10%).

³ The German proposal of 1994 foresaw an equal share of 1) size of population as a proportion of the Union (1/3); 2) size of national territory as a proportion of the whole Union (1/3); and 3) GDP as a proportion of the whole Union (1/3).

⁴ This system calculates a quota in relation to each Land, based on a combination of a Land's share in total tax revenues and the total population.

⁵ The asylum distribution system in Austria is solely based on the population size of the federal Länder compared to the overall population in Austria.

III. Comparison of Quota Following Different Distribution Models

