



European Council

Brussels, 6 March 2016

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LIMITE

NOTE

Subject: Meeting of the EU Heads of State or Government
(Brussels, 7 March 2016)
- Draft Statement

Delegations will find attached the draft Statement of the EU Heads of State or Government.

Draft Statement of the EU Heads of State or Government

1. Following their meeting with Prime Minister Davutoğlu, the EU Heads of State or Government addressed the migration situation, in particular as regards the Western Balkans route.
2. They recalled that the European Council, at its meeting on 18-19 February, decided to get back to a situation where all Members of the Schengen area fully apply the Schengen Borders Code, while taking into account the specificities of the maritime borders, and to end the wave-through approach. Irregular flows of migrants along the Western Balkans route are coming to an end; this route is now closed. The EU will stand by Greece in this difficult moment and will do its utmost to help manage the situation that has arisen as a consequence of this development. This is a collective EU responsibility requiring fast and efficient mobilisation of all available EU means and resources and of Member States' contributions.
3. Action is required along the following lines:
 - a) provide an immediate and effective response to the very difficult humanitarian situation which is rapidly developing on the ground. Emergency support will be provided urgently by the Commission, in close cooperation with Greece, other Member States and non-governmental organisations on the basis of an assessment, by the Commission and Greece, of the needs and a contingency and response plan. In this context, Heads of State or Government welcome the Commission proposal on the provision of emergency support within the EU and call on the Council to adopt it before the March European Council, thus expanding the range of financial instruments that can be used; they invite the budgetary authority to take any necessary follow-up measures;

- b) provide further assistance to Greece in managing the external borders, including those with FYROM and Albania, and ensuring the proper functioning of hotspots, with 100% identification, registration and security checks, and the provision of sufficient reception capacities. Frontex will launch an additional call for national guest officers as soon as possible and all Member States should respond in full by 1 April at the latest. Europol will rapidly deploy guest officers in all hotspots to reinforce security checks and support the Greek authorities in the fight against smugglers. In this context, Heads of State of Government welcome the NATO activity in the Aegean Sea, which became operational today, and call on all members of NATO to support it actively;
 - c) assist Greece in ensuring comprehensive, large scale and fast-track returns to Turkey of all irregular migrants not in need of international protection, building on the Greece-Turkey readmission agreement and, from 1 June, the EU-Turkey readmission agreement;
 - d) accelerate the implementation of relocation to alleviate the heavy burden that presently weighs on Greece. EASO will launch a further call for national expertise to support the Greek asylum system and all Member States should respond rapidly and in full. Member States are also invited to provide more places for relocation as a matter of urgency. The Commission will report on a monthly basis to the Council on the implementation of relocation commitments;
 - e) continue to cooperate closely with the non-EU countries of the Western Balkans and provide any necessary assistance;
 - f) implement the existing resettlement commitments and continue work on a credible voluntary humanitarian admission programme with Turkey;
 - g) take any necessary measures immediately in respect of any new routes opening up, and step up the fight against smugglers;
 - h) take forward, as a matter of priority, all the elements of the Commission roadmap on getting "back to Schengen", so as to end temporary internal border controls and re-establish the normal functioning of the Schengen area before the end of the year.
4. These are urgent measures that have to be taken against the background of the present situation on the ground and should be kept under review. The European Council will come back to the migration file in all its aspects at the March European Council to further consolidate the joint European implementation of our comprehensive migration strategy.