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From: Mr Filippo Grandi, High Commissioner for Refugees  
To: Mr Boyko Borissov, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria  
Subject: Letter from the High Commissioner for Refugees to the Prime Minister of Bulgaria

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Delegations will find attached a letter from the High Commissioner for Refugees to the Prime Minister of Bulgaria.

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Case Postale 2500  
1211 Genève 2  
Suisse

18 June 2018

Sir,

I have the honour to write to you ahead of the European Council meeting on 28 and 29 June, which I understand will include discussions on the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

I wish to take this opportunity to commend the Bulgarian Presidency for the tireless work undertaken to seek agreement on the reform package for the CEAS. Recent developments in the Central Mediterranean Sea have brought home the urgency of reaching such an agreement. The current situation, where a small number of EU Member States bears a disproportionate responsibility for those arriving in the EU, is unsustainable.

At the centre of a functioning common EU asylum system, and to safeguard the right to asylum, is the need for a predictable solidarity mechanism to support those Member States whose capacities come under particular pressure, with the relocation of refugees and other measures. Through such a mechanism, it would be possible to envisage a division of labour whereby countries which allow disembarkation or which are faced with large numbers of arrivals by land could rely on other EU countries for support with asylum processing and solutions. I urge all concerned to seize the opportunity of this European Council meeting to make substantial progress in this regard.

To complement proposals on intra-EU solidarity, UNHCR has also called for a broader cross-regional approach for the Mediterranean Sea. Such an arrangement could complement the ongoing work that we are already undertaking in Libya and elsewhere, with EU and Member State support.

I would welcome an urgent opportunity to discuss with concerned governments new collaborative arrangements, within and outside the EU, to ensure predictable and safe disembarkation of those rescued at sea, undertake processing of applications for international protection, and realise solutions, including through the granting of asylum, relocation within the EU, resettlement, or return of those found not to be in need of international protection. UNHCR is currently preparing a proposal in this respect, together with the International Organisation for Migration, which we will share with you shortly.

Let me also emphasize the importance of greater efforts by all States globally to support resettlement and other pathways for admission, which, coupled with more investment in major host countries, can provide a safe alternative to irregular onward movements. Such programmes are needed to provide access to protection and solutions for some of the world's most vulnerable refugees. They are also essential to a more coherent response to today's global displacement phenomenon, which is the main focus of the ongoing discussions around the global compact on refugees. Against this background, I very much hope that the proposal for a European Union Resettlement Framework will advance before the European Council meeting.

His Excellency  
Mr. Boyko Borissov  
Presidency of the Council of the European Union  
and Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria



I take this opportunity to assure you of UNHCR's continued support of the Presidency, EU institutions and Member States in these endeavours.

I also wish to note that a copy of this letter will be shared with the Vice-President of the European Commission, Ms. Federica Mogherini, and the European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Mr. Dimitris Avramopoulos.

Please accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Filippo Grandi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Filippo Grandi