

Statement on the occasion of the World Refugee Day – 20 June 2014 – For immediate release

Mediterranean Caritas call for safe and open channels of legal entry to the EU

Caritas Europa together with Caritas Italy, as a leading organisation of the Migramed⁽¹⁾, and in light of the upcoming Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU, **call the EU and EU Member States to provide save and legal entry to seek international protection for refugees as well as legal channels for labour migration all across the EU.**

We urge the EU and all EU Member States to adopt the following concrete measures:

- **Introduce humanitarian visa** that is easily accessible through **embassies from countries of origin and transit** and are affordable;
- Facilitate **family reunification** for refugees and migrants to join their families in the EU;
- Consider **interchangeability of embassies** of different EU Member States to allow easier access to them in third countries;
- Extend the **humanitarian admission** programmes;
- Engage in more **resettlement**.

All these measures will only work well once the EU also implements **legal channels for labour migration** along with it.

Moreover, the European Union must comply with its **international obligations for human rights protection at EU external borders** including **search and rescue operations**. Violence (by police or other actors) – witnessed by Caritas organisations against migrants at the borders – has to be stopped in countries of origin, transit or destination and the EU should step out to enforce international obligations in this regard in third countries.

We call on the transit countries and countries of origin:

- **To enable and facilitate the safe and legal channels of entry** to the EU;
- Not to restrict the freedom of movement and to comply with the **right to leave any country** including one's own, for instance by speedy access to travel and identity documents.

Lives are being lost every day at the external borders of the EU. These human tragedies need to be addressed as soon as possible. People come to Europe to seek international protection or to seek a better life. One of hundreds of tragedies happened in October 2013 off the isle of Lampedusa where 366 migrants drowned in the sea. Europe cannot turn a blind eye to these incidents.

Caritas appreciated the **European Parliament [adoption of a resolution](#)** in which it is well highlighted that “*EU legislation provides some tools, such as the Visa Code and the Schengen Borders Code, which make it possible to grant humanitarian visas*” and that “*legal entry into the EU is preferable to a more dangerous irregular entry, which could entail human trafficking risks and loss of life*”. Also the [Task Force Mediterranean](#) has been created to prevent further loss of lives at EU shores.

We need some tools which constitute “*an out-and-out answer*” from “*an EU based on **solidarity and concrete support***”, as Cecilia Malmström said by the creation of the Task Force Mediterranean.

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Pope Francis said:

“Working together for a better world requires that countries help one another, in a spirit of willingness and trust, without raising insurmountable barriers. A good synergy can be a source of encouragement to government leaders as they confront socioeconomic imbalances and an unregulated globalization, which are among some of the causes of migration movements in which individuals are more victims than protagonists. No country can singlehandedly face the difficulties associated with this phenomenon, which is now so widespread that it affects every continent in the twofold movement of immigration and emigration.”

To the Editor: Background information:

[Caritas Europa](#) is a network of 49 Caritas organisations working on the ground in 46 European countries. They address the challenges being faced by those who are vulnerable on a daily basis. Caritas organisations are present and active in every country in Europe, with well-developed national and local structures directed at assisting the poor. Caritas Europa has a heartfelt commitment to analyse and fight poverty and social exclusion; and to promote true integral human development, social justice and sustainable social systems in Europe and throughout the world.

(1) **Migramed** is an annual meeting organised at international level by Caritas Italy, Caritas Europa and Caritas Internationalis, where all the Caritas of the Mediterranean area join forces to discuss and confront themselves with the crucial migration and asylum related issues. Migramed Caritas Mediterranean network carries out advocacy and institutional dialogue within the countries captivated. Migramed 2014 took place in Athens on 9 – 12 June, with Caritas from 21 countries participating.

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