

## I

(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

## RESOLUTIONS

## COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

90TH PLENARY SESSION HELD ON 11 AND 12 MAY 2011

**Resolution of the Committee of the Regions on 'Dealing with the impact and consequences of revolutions in the Mediterranean'**

(2011/C 192/01)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

**A humanitarian crisis is unfolding**

1. is observing with concern the changes and uncertainty in the Southern Mediterranean and fully supports the process of social, economic and political reform that should lead to true democratisation and new stability in all the countries in question and genuine opportunities for the men and women of the area to build peace and prosperity; regrets and strongly condemns any form of violence and human rights abuses in certain countries in the area and calls urgently on the European Union to live up to its responsibilities to support peaceful change and democratic transition;

2. is concerned about the movement of refugees resulting from the events in North Africa, which directly affects those Member States and their local communities which are closer to the region; stresses therefore the need to provide, without delay, the concrete solidarity and the necessary support pledged by the European Union and the Member States in the European Council Declaration of 11 March 2011 and the European Council Conclusions of 24-25 March 2011

3. recalls the declaration of the CoR presidency on 4 March 2011 <sup>(1)</sup> which offered to support the aspirations of the peoples of the whole region and expressed the Committee's solidarity with their calls for effective democracy, political pluralism, fundamental freedoms and respect for human rights;

4. notes also that a considerable number of people are moving to the EU for economic, political or social reasons; recognises that some of these persons are displaced as a result of the emergency situation in the region and that they may have legitimate claims to asylum or international protection; recalls that the right to asylum is guaranteed *inter alia* by the Charter of Fundamental Rights and corresponds to the EU and the Member States' obligations under international law;

5. recognises that political and social instability in the Southern Mediterranean coupled with repression, economic difficulties across a variety of sectors, as well as the continuing deterioration of the environment are major driving forces behind the migration of populations in and from the region, which is likely to continue since more and more people are fleeing political unrest and poverty;

**Immediate response to the crisis**

6. underscores the need to provide an immediate and urgent response to the deteriorating humanitarian situation, which takes into account fundamental rights and the individual situations of the people concerned; considers that this response requires a coordinated approach from the EU, the Member States and authorities at the sub-national levels and reiterates that the experience of cities and regions throughout the EU of emergency responses and civil protection is available to the EU institutions, agencies and the Member States; this approach should also involve organised civil society, so as to capitalise upon people-to-people-contacts in the countries concerned;

<sup>(1)</sup> CdR 113/2011.

7. calls for true and real solidarity towards the Member States and communities most directly affected by migration flows and based on a fair allocation of operational and financial responsibilities as enshrined in the Treaties, in line with Article 80 of the TFEU; urges the EU and the Member States to continue to adapt these measures as the situation evolves, taking into consideration the needs of the migrant or displaced populations and the communities which are providing them with assistance;

8. calls on all the Local and Regional Authorities of the EU to support a burden-sharing action plan to help resettle refugees from the region and set up a solidarity fund to tackle the humanitarian pressures caused by the crisis and thus to urge the Member States to activate the mechanism provided for in Council Directive 2001/55/EC on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a 'mass influx' of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof, based on the principle of solidarity between Member States, and to demonstrate the European Union's genuine commitment to the principle of solidarity and responsibility-sharing;

9. pending the allocation of specific funds, calls for existing financial instruments to be used to mobilise resources rapidly in the areas affected, in order to deal with the emergency situations caused by the influx of migrants;

10. suggests introducing compensation measures to support the areas most affected by the emergency in order to offset the enormous losses and negative impact on local economies, particularly in key sectors such as tourism and fisheries;

11. in this context, suggests that Council Directive 2001/55/EC be reviewed in order to define more clearly what constitutes a 'mass influx' of migrants, possibly defining it in relation to the receiving countries' population;

12. underlines that all measures taken by Member States must be in accordance with EU legislation, respecting the Schengen acquis which guarantees free movement of citizens within the EU and therefore constitutes an essential achievement of European integration, as well as safeguarding fundamental human rights as outlined in the instruments of international law and the EU Treaties, in particular the Charter of Fundamental Rights;

13. welcomes the European Commission's proposals with a view to safeguarding the Community character of the Schengen system to ensure that the necessary responses to external events by the Schengen system are based on transparent, common European rules and do not unduly restrict existing cross-border cooperation;

### A long-term response

14. is more than ever aware of the pressing need to develop comprehensive common immigration and asylum policies based on solidarity and a fair sharing of responsibilities; stresses that local and regional authorities should as a matter of priority be involved in the policies on legal migration and the integration of migrants;

15. insists that all efforts should be mobilised to counter irregular migration and its side-effects, in particular trafficking of human beings; supports the conclusion of readmission agreements between the EU and the countries in the region; calls for a review of the mandate and role of FRONTEX, including a reinforcement of its financial, technical and human resources to patrol the EU's borders, including the Mediterranean coasts;

16. joins calls to review the current asylum legislation, in particular the mechanism for determining the Member State responsible for examining asylum applications, and urges the EU institutions and the Member States to continue work on the full establishment of a Common European Asylum System; expects that the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) will provide valuable support to the most exposed Member States in managing migration;

17. is convinced that democracy based on free and fair elections and the rule of law, as well as efficient and democratic local and regional administration, are prerequisites for stability and political as well as economic development in the countries concerned and play a crucial role in allowing citizens to harness their competences in their own country;

18. underlines the practical usefulness of capacity building programmes within the context of the enlargement and the European Neighbourhood policies and – taking the Local Administration Facility pilot programme as a concrete example<sup>(2)</sup> – suggests that equivalent initiatives should be developed for the Southern Mediterranean countries in order to support their capacity building at local and regional level;

19. notes the connection between migration and development policies and sees the need to develop policies supportive of the creation of economic and social conditions in the region that can guarantee a sustainable future for the local populations, thus decreasing the incentives to migrate; in particular, considers it essential to reduce poverty and to create jobs for the younger generation and therefore calls for full use to be made of existing EU resources and experience to support education and vocational training in these countries;

<sup>(2)</sup> The CoR already cooperates closely with the European Commission in supporting this pilot programme that is currently restricted to candidate and potential candidate countries

20. underlines the importance of boosting trade and investment with these countries, and of providing micro-credit facilities for the creation of small businesses, as a means to enable these countries to increase their own economic growth and reduce poverty; increased trade with North Africa would also be of benefit to Europe, resulting in the creation of many jobs for Europeans and economic growth for the EU; therefore calls for a joint effort to bring down remaining trade barriers as appropriate;

21. is convinced that the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) could play an important role in addressing the issue of migration and its implications if it were to be invested with the necessary political will and resources by all parties concerned; underlines in this regard the contribution which the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) can make by facilitating cooperation and the exchange of know-how between local and regional authorities; suggests that the ARLEM Assembly considers carefully the situation and includes among its priorities the appropriate responses to the unfolding events, and takes the necessary steps within its remit to actively support the democratisation process in the countries concerned;

22. notes that diplomacy at city and regional level can help to promote and consolidate the ongoing democratisation processes, involve the general public and improve relations between people and their governments;

23. calls on the European Commission to ensure that, in its forthcoming policy initiatives <sup>(3)</sup>, the groundwork is laid for the development of comprehensive responses including sensitivity to the role and contribution of local and regional authorities and that further synergies between the policies on immigration and asylum, external action and development are developed in close interaction with the local and regional level;

24. instructs the CoR President to submit the present resolution to the President of the European Council, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the European External Action Service, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees; the European Economic and Social Committee, the UfM's co-presidency and secretariat, the UfM parliamentary assembly and the ARLEM.

Brussels, 12 May 2011.

*The President  
of the Committee of the Regions*  
Mercedes BRESSO

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<sup>(3)</sup> Such as the European Neighbourhood Policy review, the annual report on migration and asylum, the Communication on enhanced intra-EU solidarity, the Communication for Migration and Mobility for Development as well as the Global Approach to Migration.