

Wednesday 29 April 2015

P8_TA(2015)0176

Extraordinary European Council meeting (23 April 2015) — The latest tragedies in the Mediterranean and EU migration and asylum policies**European Parliament resolution of 29 April 2015 on the latest tragedies in the Mediterranean and EU migration and asylum policies (2015/2660(RSP))**

(2016/C 346/07)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
 - having regard to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the additional protocol thereto,
 - having regard to its resolution of 23 October 2013 on migratory flows in the Mediterranean, with particular attention to the tragic events off Lampedusa ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the Commission staff working document of 22 May 2014 on the implementation of the communication on the work of the Task Force Mediterranean,
 - having regard to the debate on the situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration, held in Parliament on 25 November 2014,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 December 2014 on the situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to the UNHCR Central Mediterranean Sea initiative and to the UNHCR proposals to address current and future arrivals of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Europe,
 - having regard to the ten-point action plan on migration of the Joint Foreign and Home Affairs Council of 20 April 2015,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the EU Council special summit on the Mediterranean refugee crisis of 22 April 2015,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), over 1 500 persons have died in the Mediterranean Sea since the beginning of this year;
- B. whereas according to the IOM, an estimated 23 918 migrants have reached the Italian coast since 1 January 2015; whereas according to the Greek authorities, 10 445 migrants were rescued by the Greek Coastguard in the Aegean Sea in the first quarter of 2015;
- C. whereas Italian maritime forces, the Italian Coast Guard, the Italian Navy and several commercial ships carried out relentless operations to rescue migrants in distress on the Mediterranean Sea, and came to the rescue of approximately 10 000 migrants in the six days from Friday, 10 April to Thursday, 16 April 2015;
- D. whereas the last operation solely dedicated to search and rescue in the Mediterranean, Mare Nostrum, rescued 150 810 migrants over a 364-day period; whereas initial estimates are not showing a reduction in the number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean at this point;

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0448.

⁽²⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2014)0105.

Wednesday 29 April 2015

- E. whereas a larger proportion of the people trying to cross the Mediterranean are fleeing from conflict or persecution in Syria, Iraq, Eritrea, Somalia and Libya; whereas up to 700 migrants are missing and are feared drowned after the wooden fishing boat on which they were crammed capsized near Libya as a Portuguese merchant vessel was coming to its aid late on Saturday, 18 April 2015; whereas one of the survivors was reported to have informed the Italian authorities that there may have been up to 950 on board; whereas a similar tragedy took place earlier this month, in which around 400 migrants were reported to have lost their lives at sea when a wooden fishing boat carrying about 550 people capsized;
- F. whereas Joint Operation 'Triton', coordinated by Frontex, became fully operational on 1 November 2014, with an initial budget of only EUR 2,9 million per month compared with over EUR 9 million per month for Mare Nostrum; whereas more than 24 400 irregular migrants have been rescued on the central Mediterranean route since the launch of Joint Operation 'Triton', including nearly 7 860 with the participation of assets co-financed by Frontex;
- G. whereas smugglers and human traffickers exploit irregular migration and put at risk the lives of migrants for their own business profits, are responsible for thousands of deaths and pose a serious challenge to the EU and the Member States; whereas traffickers generate profits of EUR 20 billion per year from their criminal activities; whereas according to Europol organised criminal groups actively facilitating the transport of irregular migrants across the Mediterranean Sea have been linked to human trafficking, drugs, firearms and terrorism; whereas on 17 March 2015 Europol launched its Joint Operational Team 'Mare' to tackle these criminal groups;
- H. whereas regional instability and conflict are having an impact on the mass influx of migrants and flows of displaced people and, therefore, on the number of individuals attempting to reach the EU; whereas the rapid expansion of IS and Da'esh in neighbouring conflict areas will ultimately have an impact on the mass influx of migrants and flows of displaced people;
1. Expresses its deep regret and sorrow at the recurring tragic loss of lives in the Mediterranean; urges the European Union and the Member States to build on existing cooperation and do everything possible to prevent further loss of life at sea; calls on the EU and Member States to do their utmost to identify the bodies and missing persons and to inform their relatives;
 2. Calls for the EU and the Member States to provide the necessary resources to ensure that search and rescue obligations are effectively fulfilled and therefore properly funded; calls on the Member States to continue to show solidarity and commitment by stepping up their contributions to the Frontex and EASO budgets and operations, and undertakes to provide those agencies with the resources (human and equipment) needed to fulfil their obligations through the EU budget and its relevant funds;
 3. Reiterates the need for the EU to base its response to the latest tragedies in the Mediterranean on solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, as stated in Article 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and to take a comprehensive European approach; reiterates the need for the EU to step up fair sharing of responsibility and solidarity towards Member States which receive the highest numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in either absolute or proportional terms;
 4. Welcomes the European Council's commitment to reinforcing the EU Triton operation by increasing funding and assets; urges the EU to establish a clear mandate for Triton so as to expand its area of operation and increase its mandate for search and rescue operations at EU level;
 5. Calls for a robust and permanent humanitarian European rescue operation, which, like Mare Nostrum, would operate on the high seas and to which all Member States would contribute financially and with equipment and assets; urges the EU to co-fund such an operation;
 6. Welcomes the European Council's proposal for joint processing of asylum applications with the support of EASO teams; calls on the Commission to enlarge the mandate of EASO to increase its operational role in the processing of asylum applications;

Wednesday 29 April 2015

7. Calls on the Member States to make full use of the existing possibilities for issuing humanitarian visas at their embassies and consular offices; points out, in this connection, that the Council should seriously consider the possibility of triggering the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive or Article 78(3) of the TFEU, both of which foresee a solidarity mechanism in the case of mass and sudden inflows of displaced persons;
8. Calls on the Member States to make greater contributions to existing resettlement programmes, especially those Member States which have not contributed anything;
9. Calls on the Commission to establish a binding quota for the distribution of asylum seekers among all the Member States;
10. Stresses the need to encourage voluntary return policies, while guaranteeing the protection of rights for all migrants and ensuring safe and legal access to the EU asylum system, with due respect for the principle of *non refoulement*;
11. Welcomes the fact that the VP/HR and the Latvian Presidency immediately convened an extraordinary joint council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministers of the Interior in Luxembourg, and welcomes the fact that the Member States immediately convened an extraordinary summit in order to find common solutions in response to the crisis situation in the Mediterranean; notes that a broad first debate was held on options for saving lives, fighting against smugglers and traffickers and sharing responsibility as regards reception and protection among Member States; stresses that the Member States need to further develop the commitment, and regrets the lack of commitment from the European Council to setting up a credible EU-wide binding mechanism for solidarity;
12. Calls for a rapid and full transposition and effective implementation of the Common European Asylum System by all participating Member States, thereby ensuring common European standards, including reception conditions for asylum seekers and respect for fundamental rights, as envisaged under existing legislation;
13. Calls for closer coordination of EU and Member State policies in tackling the root causes of migration; underlines the need for a holistic EU approach, that will strengthen the coherence of its internal and external policies and, in particular, its common foreign and security policy, development policy and migration policy; calls for EU cooperation with partner countries in the Middle East and Africa to be strengthened in order to promote democracy, fundamental freedoms and rights, security and prosperity;
14. Urges the Member States and third countries to lay down the strongest possible criminal sanctions against human trafficking and smuggling both into and across the EU, and also against individuals or groups exploiting vulnerable migrants in the EU, while ensuring that individual who come to the aid of asylum seekers and vessels in peril are not prosecuted;
15. Calls on the Member States to work closely with Europol, Frontex, EASO and Eurojust in order to fight against human traffickers and criminal networks of smugglers, and to detect and trace their funding and identify their modus operandi in order to prevent them from making money by putting migrants' lives at risk; stresses the need to strengthen cooperation with third countries, in particular those surrounding Libya, which is indispensable if such criminal networks are to be successfully dismantled, in terms of both law enforcement training and the provision of information services; stresses the need for third countries to respect international law with regard to saving lives at sea and to ensure the protection of refugees and respect for fundamental rights;
16. Emphasises that the root causes of violence and underdevelopment need to be addressed in the countries of origin in order to stem the flow of refugees and economic migrants; points out, in this connection, that significantly enhancing governance structures by building effective and inclusive public institutions, ensuring capacity building in third country asylum systems, establishing the rule of law and fighting endemic corruption at all levels, as well as promoting human rights and further democracy, should be the main priorities of all governments in the countries of origin;
17. Reiterates its support for all UN-led negotiations towards re-establishing democratic government authority in Libya and its commitment to stepping up efforts to address conflict and instability in Libya and Syria; stresses that creating regional stability in conflict areas is key to reducing the further displacement of individuals;

Wednesday 29 April 2015

18. Recalls that the purpose of this resolution is to respond to the recent tragic events in the Mediterranean, to the European Council Conclusions of 23 April 2015 and to propose a set of urgent measures to be taken immediately, bearing in mind that the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs — the competent committee for such matters — is currently drafting a report which will reflect Parliament's medium- and longer-term policy orientations on migration;

19. Calls on the Commission to develop and come up with an ambitious European agenda on migration, which takes into account all aspects of migration;

20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.
