

Joint Statement on Mediterranean Crossings

UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for International Migration and Development Peter Sutherland, and Director-General of the International Organization for Migration William Lacy Swing

A tragedy of epic proportions is unfolding in the Mediterranean. We, the undersigned*, strongly urge European leaders to put human life, rights, and dignity first today when agreeing upon a common response to the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean.

The European Union is founded on the fundamental principles of humanity, solidarity and respect for human rights. We urge EU Member States to demonstrate moral and political leadership in adopting a holistic and forward-looking action plan centred upon these values.

The European Union response needs to go beyond the present minimalist approach in the 10 Point Plan on Migration, announced by the EU on Monday, which focuses primarily on stemming the arrival of migrants and refugees on its shores. As a paramount principle, the safety, protection needs, and human rights of all migrants and refugees should be at the forefront of the EU response. EU leaders must look beyond the present situation and work closely with transit and origin countries both to alleviate the immediate plight of migrants and refugees and address in a more comprehensive way the many factors that drive them to resort to such desperate journeys by sea. Enforcement alone will not solve the issue of irregular migration, but could increase the risks and abuse faced by migrants and refugees.

We would therefore encourage bold, collective action to expand the range of measures under consideration to include:

- Setting in place a State-led, robust, proactive, and well-resourced search-and-rescue operation, urgently and without delay, with a capacity similar to Mare Nostrum and a clear mission to save lives.
- Creating sufficient channels for safe and regular migration, including for low-skilled migrant workers and individuals in need of family reunification, and access to protection where needed, as safe alternatives to resorting to smugglers.
- Making a firm commitment to receive significantly higher numbers of refugees through EU-wide resettlement, in addition to current quotas, and on a scale which will make a real impact, combined with other legal means for refugees to reach safety.
- Bolstering arrangements to support those countries receiving the most arrivals (Italy, Malta, and Greece) and to distribute responsibility more equitably across the European Union for saving lives and protecting all those in need.
- Combatting racist and xenophobic rhetoric vilifying migrants and refugees.

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