

Statement on the European Agenda on Migration

Peter Sutherland, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for International Migration and Development

I welcome the visionary reforms to the European asylum system put forward today in the European Commission's "European Agenda on Migration."

In particular, the proposed relocation and resettlement programs, based on a distribution key, promise to offer safer legal avenues to asylum seekers and to distribute responsibility for providing international protection more equitably across the EU. I expect that the resettlement target of 20,000 will increase over time and that the EU will continue to expand safe avenues by providing more humanitarian, labor, and family reunification visas to asylum seekers and migrants.

I also commend the Union's commitment to triple the resources for Operations Triton and Poseidon in the Mediterranean Sea so that they are at least equal in effect to Mare Nostrum. However, the EU needs to make search-and-rescue the top priority for this effort.

As the E.U. pursues its anti-smuggling initiatives, meanwhile, I urge Member States not to put any refugees or migrants in the line of fire, and to design any operation in complete conformity with international law.

The agenda also begins to give prominence to critical issues related to migration and development, especially the vital need for migrants, refugees, and migration to be included in the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda. Only by forging a sustainable, long-term strategy on migration and asylum can the European Union meet its humanitarian, economic, and external relations needs.

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