



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 10 June 2003 (11.06)
(OR. fr)**

**Interinstitutional File:
2000/0238 (CNS)**

**10235/03
ADD 1**

LIMITE

ASILE 35

ADDENDUM TO OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

of: Council (Justice and Home Affairs)

dated: 5 and 6 June 2003

No. prev. doc.: 9947/03 ASILE 33 ADD 1

No. Cion prop.: 10279/02 ASILE 33 + REV 1 (de, en fr) - COM (2002) 326 final/2

Subject: Amended proposal for a Council Directive on minimum standards on procedures in Member States for granting and withdrawing refugee status

Delegations will find attached statements concerning safe countries of origin.

**Joint statement by France, the United Kingdom, Germany,
Spain and Italy with regard to asylum**

1. At its meeting in Tampere, the European Council reaffirmed the importance which the Union and its Member States attach to absolute respect of the right to seek asylum. It was agreed to work towards establishing a Common European Asylum System, based on the full and inclusive application of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, thus ensuring that nobody is sent back to persecution.
2. France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Italy agree that it is necessary to identify quickly and effectively those persons in need of protection, and, in parallel, to provide for mechanisms to prevent abuse in order to maintain the credibility of the institution of asylum.
3. In connection with the establishment of a Common European Asylum System, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Italy are very much in favour of the introduction of a priority or specific procedure for processing certain asylum applications in order to increase the efficiency of asylum procedures for the benefit of all applicants.
4. France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Italy would like the priority procedure to identify in particular those applications which appear manifestly unfounded with regard to the situation prevailing in the applicant's country of origin.
5. The five States note that a large number of asylum applications are submitted by nationals of countries which may be presumed incapable of either perpetrating or permitting persecution within their territory, *inter alia* because they are sufficiently stable and democratic in nature and respect human rights, and which may be considered to be safe countries of origin.

Drawing up of a minimum joint list of safe countries of origin

6. France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Italy agree that those countries which may be considered to be safe countries of origin must be identified on the basis of predefined criteria, with due regard for international commitments in the field of asylum and respect for human rights.
7. In order to ensure that implementation of the concept of safe countries of origin contributes effectively to the efficiency of asylum procedures, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Italy call for the drawing up of a minimum joint list of countries considered to be safe countries of origin, without prejudice to any national decisions deeming other countries to be safe countries of origin.
8. France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Italy call upon the Commission to incorporate into the proposal for a Directive on minimum standards on procedures for granting and withdrawing refugee status the principle of the drawing up and review of a minimum joint list of safe countries of origin, and invite the Member States of the European Union to share that same objective.
9. France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Italy call upon the Commission to submit to the Council of the European Union as soon as possible an initial proposal for a minimum joint list of safe countries of origin. That list will be adopted by the Council and could be revised in the light of developments in the international situation.

Austria endorses this declaration.

Statement by Benelux with regard to asylum

In the spirit of the conclusions of the Tampere European Council, the Benelux States have always argued in favour of a high degree of harmonisation at European level in the field of asylum.

In that connection, the Benelux Governments welcome the fact that a majority of Member States of the European Union have today endorsed the position adopted by them and by other Member States in favour of drawing up a joint list of safe countries of origin in order to permit the implementation of a swift and specific procedure for processing applications submitted by persons from those countries.

Such endorsement is in keeping with the recommendation made by the Benelux States that more effective asylum procedures be introduced in accordance with the Geneva Convention and in the interests of granting swift protection to those who require it, while combating manifestly improper asylum applications in an appropriate manner.

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