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NOTE

from : Presidency

Subject : **High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration**
- Résumé of the Action Plans drawn up by the High Level Working Group

Delegations will find attached a résumé prepared by the Presidency of the Action Plans drawn up by the High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration.

HIGH LEVEL WORKING GROUP ON ASYLUM AND MIGRATION

RÉSUMÉ OF THE ACTION PLANS PREPARED BY THE HLWG

1. Afghanistan

Situation: Although in many parts of Afghanistan the situation has recently stabilised, the long-standing armed conflict still prevails in some parts of the country. The Taliban regime claims to impose its authority on about ninety per cent of the territory. Human rights issues continue to be a major concern all over Afghanistan. The economy is in a poor state. Out of a population of 21 million, more than 3 million have fled the country, and there are about 300 000 internally displaced people. The total number of Afghans in Pakistan is estimated at 2 million and in Iran 1,4 million. The total number of Afghan nationals who have applied for asylum in the EU is 17 300.

Examples of measures recommended by the HLWG: Support for the UN peace efforts in Afghanistan, continuation in assisting to find a political solution to the conflict. Support for the many-sided activities of UNCHR in the region. The EC and Afghanistan Cooperation Strategy 1999-2001 forms a basis to develop measures to provide economic assistance in Afghanistan and in the neighbouring region, and to tackle various phenomena connected to illicit immigration. Training airport officials in dealing with travel documents. Cooperation with the neighbouring countries, namely Pakistan and Iran, will be sought.

2. Iraq

Situation: Iraq is a dictatorship with no separation of powers. Principles of the rule of law and fundamental political rights are not observed. After Iraq invaded Kuwait comprehensive sanctions were imposed by the United Nations Security Council on Iraq in 1990. Northern Iraq is not under the control of the central government, but is largely administered as an autonomous region by the two Kurdish groups - KDP and PUK. Iraq will remain a developing country for a long time. The human rights situation is alarming. Refugees are a regional problem touching Iran, Jordan, Turkey and other countries of the region, where there are about 700 000 Iraqi refugees in total. The number of asylum seekers and refugees from Iraq in the EU area was about 28 000 in 1998.

Examples of measures recommended by the HLWG: Continuation of the implementation of the EU Action Plan on the influx of migrants from Iraq and the neighbouring region. Additional measures to respect the relevant resolutions of the UNSC and to follow the Council conclusions of 25 January 1999. Continuation of humanitarian action and collecting of information in the government-controlled Iraq. In Northern Iraq support for economic development and humanitarian activities as well as in improving the legal access of NGOs to the area.

3. Morocco

Situation: Morocco, after a constitutional reform, is experiencing a process of opening-up to ensure the continuity of the political regime by placing it on broader and institutionalised foundations. The current government is committed to promoting economic development, modernisation of public administration, justice and health and promotion of human rights. Morocco belongs to the group of developing countries with a "low average income". Improvements in the field of human rights are needed, especially in areas concerning individual rights and social and political freedoms. Morocco can be considered as a country of origin as well as of transit of economic migrants toward European countries. It has great migration potential due to its economic and demographic characteristics. At present some 1,6 million Moroccans are legally residing in Europe. Refused entry into Spain totalled into 761 000 cases in 1998.

Examples of measures recommended by the HLWG: Building on existing channels to improve collection of relevant data, dissemination of correct information on migration, development of strategies to combat illegal trafficking, promotion of measures aimed at implementing readmission agreements. Promotion of foreign direct investment, vocational training and self-employment and small-scale enterprises. Facilitation of voluntary return and reintegration, integration into society of Moroccans legally residing in EU countries.

4. Somalia

Situation: Since 1991 Somalia has been without a central government. Different security conditions prevail in different parts of Somalia. Northern parts of the country are more stable than the war-torn southern parts. Armed conflict has had disastrous consequences for the economy of the entire country. There is a widespread lack of respect for human rights. Arbitrary and summary executions, mutilation and other cruel and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are frequent. There is no effective judicial system.

Examples of measures recommended by the HLWG: (The absence of a central government limits the scope for effective EU action.) Support for peace process and conflict resolution as well as the respect for the UNSC imposed arms embargo. Prevention of human rights violations, support to UNHRC and UNHCHR. Reconstruction of local administrative structures. Continuation of humanitarian assistance, and assistance to job creation, education and health systems, reconstruction of civil society. Assessment of programmes for returning failed asylum seekers/illegal immigrants, development of measures to address the reception and protection capacities of countries in the region, designing measures to reduce trafficking in children.

5. Sri Lanka

Situation: Sri Lanka has a unicameral parliament with a powerful Executive Presidency. Sri Lanka is a lower-middle income, predominantly rural country with high unemployment. An ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities has assumed violent forms since 1983. The human rights situation is a cause for concern. A significant proportion of the primary cause of migratory flows stems ultimately from the continuing conflict. The state of war has led to human rights abuses inflicted by both sides and economic deprivation and poverty in the areas most affected. A total of about 6 600 persons applied for asylum in the Member States in 1998. There also are positive factors in the situation, such as steps to improve human rights records and economic growth.

Examples of measures recommended by the HLWG: Search for ways to find a political solution to the conflict. Raising human rights issues with the Sri Lankan Government, and the LTTE. Improvement of police practices through training in human rights issues. Assessment of causes of poverty, exploration of potential partnerships in development co-operation, consideration of land-mine clearance activities. Complementing the effectiveness of Airline Liaison Officers in Colombo. Enhancing co-operation in tackling illegal immigration and in the return of failed asylum seekers/illegal immigrants.

6. Albania and the neighbouring region (interim report)

Situation: The situation in Albania and the neighbouring region (in practice Kosovo) changed dramatically in the course of the work on action plans. Albania is a country of both origin and transit for migration flows directed to European countries. Albania has still not recovered from the major crisis of 1997. During the first half of 1999 Albania was shaken by the biggest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II, when roughly 450 displaced Kosovo Albanians entered Albania. Altogether, over one million Kosovo Albanians have been forced to leave their homes since the spring 1998, and over 800 000 of them since the end of March 1999. The Member States have offered appropriate protection to Kosovo Albanians. Recently the return of Kosovo Albanians has continued, while great numbers of Kosovo Serbs and Roma have fled Kosovo. The reconstruction of Kosovo and South Eastern Europe in general is at the focus of the Stability Pact.

Examples of measures recommended by the HLWG: The recommended measures are to be seen as EU objectives in the field of asylum and migration in the processes of the international community for the rehabilitation and stabilisation of South Eastern Europe and in the process of the EU to draw up a Common Strategy on Western Balkans.