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Ressort: Politik

Europe and North Africa contact-group in Rome

Rome, 21.03.2017 [ENA]

The refugee crisis has underlined conflicting opinions on migration among EU countries and in this scenario a Europe and North Africa contact-group meeting is taking place in Rome. The Italian Premier Gentiloni told the EU-Africa contact group meeting on curbing central Mediterranean migrant flows that "Italy has greatly appreciated Europe's commitment to supporting Libya, an open path that must become a wider road".

He added that in 60 years (since the Treaty of Rome), there have been many results, many expectations but also a few risks if Europe is not able to respond to some of the demands of our co-citizens.

"Among these the demand to regulate migrant flows in the central Mediterranean is one of the strongest demands" said the Premier.

The Dublin regulation establishes which EU member state is responsible for the examination of the asylum application. The rules have the target to guarantee a fast track to asylum procedures and the examination of an application in substance by a single Member State. But this system was not envisioned to ensure a sustainable sharing of responsibilities across the EU.

The principle of the current regulation is that the responsibility for examining an asylum claim lies with the member state where the asylum seeker first arrives in the EU. When applying the Dublin rules, the country of arrival is identified as the one responsible for the asylum application. The vast majority of arrivals are now registered in Greece and Italy, putting the asylum systems of these countries of first entry under enormous pressure. This is not a fair distribution of responsibility.

A new system for assigning asylum applicants to Member States on the basis of a permanent distribution key is needed, reflecting the relative size, wealth and absorption capacity of each Member State. Responsibility would no longer be associated to the point of first entry. The increased migration flows to Europe and the thousands of refugee children currently missing throughout Europe show the limits of the current EU asylum system.

On Monday, 20th of March, according to ANSA Press Agency Premier Paolo Gentiloni said at the EU-Africa contact group meeting that: "EU members must share the migrant burden" adding that Migration from Africa to Europe "will not disappear by magic from one day to the next, and those who promise miracles risk confusing public opinion". Gentiloni demanded "long-term work" and a common

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commitment. " The EU must take on the burden of the commitment, both in welcoming those who have rights and repatriating those who do not have rights; it's not just geography that decides who should commit on common ground," he declared.

Gentiloni called for a collective effort to oppose the asylum-seeker crisis with record numbers crossing the Mediterranean to Italy. The Italian Premier said via Twitter, "only a common commitment can make it possible to regulate migrant flows in the Mediterranean".

The political and diplomatic foundations in the agreements reached with Libyan Premier Fayez al-Serraj need to be strengthened in terms of consensus in the country.

"Stabilisation is needed as well as combating further risks of division which have manifested themselves in the last few days" in Libya, where factions are fighting the internationally accepted national-unity government in Tripoli.

At the same time, fighting human traffickers on the central Mediterranean migrant route from Libya to Italy must be considered a humanitarian fight. Cooperation between Libya and EU countries is needed to inhibit and restrain the action of traffickers who are the negation of any humanitarian principle. Migrant camps will be set up in Libya with humanitarian organizations and they will consequently "fully" respect all human rights.

According to the most recent figures, migrant arrivals from Libya to Italy this year were 31.88% up over 2016 and 80.96% up on 2015, at a record of over 18,000. The latest arrivals, 1,500, are heading in an Italian ship to the Sicilian port of Augusta. From Rome another strong signal which can open new possibilities of cooperation. The European Union's involvement is crucial to the success of this initiative on the central Mediterranean migrant route, as it has been for the agreement with Turkey.

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