

## FINAL REPORT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL GROUP ON ASYLUM AND MIGRATION

The Council took note of the final report (see below), and the Action Plans which are attached to it, drawn up by the High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration in order to tackle the root causes of flight or migration in important source countries and regions (Afghanistan and neighbouring region, Iraq, Morocco, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Albania and neighbouring region).

Delegations welcomed the report and the integrated and cross-pillar approach followed by the High Level Group. It was also stressed that as a next step it is important to implement these Action Plans and to assess to this end the necessary financial means.

The final report of the High Level Group will be submitted to the General Affairs Council on 11 October 1999 in view of the Tampere Special European Council.

### "Final report High Level Group on Asylum and Migration"<sup>1</sup>:

1. In response to an initiative from the Netherlands, the General Affairs Council on 7 and 8 December 1998 set up the High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration. The Group was instructed to prepare cross-pillar Action Plans for selected countries of origin and transit of asylum seekers and migrants. At its meeting in Vienna on 11 and 12 December 1998 the European Council welcomed the setting up of the High Level Working Group. On 25 and 26 January 1999 the Council approved its terms of reference. A final report of the Group, containing Action Plans for these countries for the implementation of an integrated cross-pillar approach, was to be submitted, for approval by the Council in advance of the special session of the European Council in Tampere on 15 and 16 October 1999.
2. In carrying out its terms of reference the High Level Working Group has drawn up Action Plans for four main countries of origin and transit in the regional context and also for Iraq having made an assessment of the results yielded so far by the Action Plan of 26 January 1998 on the influx of migrants from Iraq and the neighbouring region. Action Plans have been drawn up for the following countries selected by the Council on 25 and 26 January 1999:
  - Afghanistan and neighbouring region
  - Iraq
  - Morocco
  - Somalia
  - Sri Lanka.

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<sup>1</sup> The Action Plans will be available at the Press Office.

3. As regards Albania and the neighbouring region, which had also been selected by the Council on 25 and 26 January 1999, the High Level Working Group, taking into account the specific character of the situation in the Western Balkans, the important role of the European Union in the Stability Pact and the advisability of concentrating the Union's input through this framework, considered it appropriate that the Action Plan for Albania and neighbouring region be submitted as an interim report on the situation in the region.
4. Migration and the separate but related subject of asylum occupy a prominent place in the political agenda of the European Union and its Member States. Migration is a phenomenon with both positive and negative characteristics for states and individuals concerned. The institution of asylum is based on international obligations as explicitly re-iterated in the Treaty of Amsterdam. There is today a general recognition that a cross-pillar and comprehensive approach is needed to tackle the issues involved. The EC Treaty, as revised by the Treaty of Amsterdam, and the Vienna Action Plan provide appropriate instruments for the development of such an approach and should be fully applied.
5. By establishing the High Level Working Group and giving it the task of drawing up Action Plans targeted at the situation in the above mentioned countries the Council has demonstrated that it is in the interest of both the citizens of the Union and the citizens of the countries of origin and of transit of asylum seekers and migrants to address root causes of migration and flight as well as consequences.
6. The Action Plans are a concrete expression of co-operation within the EU in the field of asylum and migration as intended by the Treaty of Amsterdam. They will make a practical contribution by suggesting concrete measures to be taken in the framework of an EU asylum and migration policy, which is one of the topics for discussion at the special session of the European Council in Tampere.
7. The combined experiences of the European Community and the Member States have enabled the Group to make an in-depth assessment of the countries selected and permitted a joint analysis of the root causes of flight or migration on the basis of an up-to-date survey of the political, economic and human rights situation in the countries concerned.
8. The Group appreciates the excellent co-operation *inter alia* with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Amnesty International, and a number of NGOs specialised in asylum and migration matters, such as the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and the Migration Policy Group (MPG).
9. The Action Plans are based on the premise that there must be a common approach which pays attention to political and socio-economic factors conducive to, or resulting from, flight or negative consequences of migration in a country. To be efficient such an approach must be comprehensive, be maintained over the long-term and be responsive to changes of situation. All relevant measures available to the European Union, the European Community and the Member States will have to be utilised in a co-ordinated fashion.
10. The Action Plans contain operational proposals for measures for co-operation with the countries concerned in three integrated categories: foreign policy, development and economic assistance as well as migration and asylum. The Action Plans can be considered as a first attempt by the European Union to define a comprehensive and coherent approach targeted at the situation in a number of important countries of origin or transit of asylum-seekers and migrants.

11. Essential instruments of a coherent approach are dialogue, co-operation and co-development. Important components of the approach are protection of all human rights, support for democratisation and the rule of law, social and economic development, alleviation of poverty, support for conflict prevention and reconciliation, and co-operation with UNHCR and human rights organisations, observance of refugees' and asylum-seekers' right to protection, integration of migrants, and the fight against illegal immigration (*inter alia* through Community readmission agreements).
12. In order to safeguard an efficient and parallel implementation of the Action Plans the Council, the Commission and the Member States need to work closely together in a co-ordinated manner. The necessary financial and personnel resources will need to be agreed upon to ensure the implementation. The expertise of the Member States needs to be made available in various policy fields. Close co-operation with the relevant international organisations should also be aimed for in implementing the Action Plans.
13. Efficient implementation will call for good co-operation between the countries covered in the Action Plans and the Union and its Member States and the mutual respect of their obligations.
14. The objectives of the cross-pillar approach and the Action Plans can also be promoted by intensifying co-operation with the countries who have applied for membership of the European Union. The High Level Working Group considers it important that these countries participate in the efforts of the European Union to develop and implement the integrated, cross-pillar approach targeted at the situation of countries of origin of asylum-seekers and migrants and transit countries. Co-operation with the Union's traditional dialogue partners can be mutually beneficial.
15. The implementation of the measures in the Action Plans needs to be monitored and the results of the integrated cross-pillar method evaluated in a way to be determined by the Council."