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Chair of the GUE/NGL group

Brussels, 9 October 2014

Open letter to the Justice and Home Affairs Council

EU Ministers must cancel Joint Police Operation 'Mos Maiorum' and instead make concrete proposals to address the tragic situation in the Mediterranean

Dear Ministers,

We are writing to you on the first day of the JHA Council where you will discuss among other items actions to better manage migration flows as well as the follow up of the Task Force Mediterranean.

The GUE/NGL Group in the European Parliament would like on this occasion to raise our serious concerns regarding the upcoming Joint Police Operation called 'Mos Maiorum' (Council document 11671/14) to be implemented from 13 to 26 October 2014 that will be coordinated by the Central Directorate for Immigration and Border Police of the Italian Ministry of Interior, in close cooperation with FRONTEX and EUROPOL. This police operation has as its main aim to "apprehend irregular migrants and gather relevant information for intelligence and investigative purposes" within the Schengen area.

This operation is of serious concern to our members for many reasons, including the expected use of "ethnic profiling" that goes against European law on non-discrimination as well as the current crisis of asylum reception centres in Southern Countries where asylum seekers' fundamental rights are not respected.

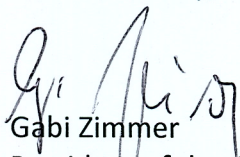
We urge you in this context to cancel the Joint Police Operation 'Mos Maiorum' and instead make concrete proposals to address the tragic situation in the Mediterranean that we have been waiting for since the shipwreck of the 3rd of October 2013 that we commemorated last week.

As GUE/NGL, we believe that the planned actions presented by the paper of the presidency to be discussed today i.e. action in cooperation with third countries, reinforced management of external borders and FRONTEX as well as fingerprinting will only worsen the situation.

We instead call on you urgently:

- To develop a collective European response to search and rescue in the Mediterranean and urge the Italian Government to continue Mare Nostrum in the meantime;
- To develop safe and legal ways to access protection in Europe for all women, men and children who are in need for protection so that they will no longer be forced to risk their lives in the Mediterranean or in the deserts on their way to Europe.
- To ensure the highest standards in your respective countries when it comes to asylum procedures, reception and qualification to ensure that migrants and asylum seekers' fundamental rights are respected including in temporary "emergency" centres;
- To ensure that asylum seekers are not sent back to their first country of arrival unless it is in their best interests as it is the case now with unaccompanied minors;
- To establish mechanisms that allow for the mutual recognition of international protection in all EU Member States.
- To support refugees to ensure they have access to housing, education and employment opportunities;
- To end detention of migrants.

Yours sincerely,



Gabi Zimmer

President of the GUE/NGL Group in the European Parliament