



COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NOTE

from : Presidency
to : Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject : Progress report on the proceedings of the High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration

The General Affairs Council set up a High Level Group on Asylum and Migration on 7 and 8 December 1998 and approved its terms of reference on 25 and 26 January 1999. The Group is to establish cross-pillar action plans that focus on migration and asylum policy for selected countries, taking account of any existing political, economic, development policy and humanitarian cooperation. Subject to the approval of Coreper and the General Affairs Council, the High Level Group will submit its final report together with the action plans to the Special European Council meeting on 14 and 15 October 1999 in Tampere. The German Presidency of the Council informed the European Parliament of the terms of reference for the Group by letter dated 3 March 1999. Furthermore, the Presidency gave the Justice and Home Affairs Council a progress report on 27 and 28 May 1999.

In accordance with its terms of reference, the Group has prepared draft action plans with a regional approach for five States, continuing on from the EU Action Plan of 26 January 1998 on the influx of migrants from Iraq and the neighbouring region. The draft action plans were prepared by the following States acting as coordinators:

- Albania and the neighbouring region (Italy/Austria)

At the outbreak of the Kosovo conflict the Group temporarily suspended its work to see how the situation evolved. Given that a settlement has now been reached with Yugoslavia and the corresponding UN Security Council Resolution has been adopted, this action plan is now being drafted according to the terms of reference.

- Afghanistan and the neighbouring region (Netherlands)
- Morocco (Spain)
- Somalia (Sweden)
- Sri Lanka (United Kingdom)
- Iraq (Germany).

The Group last met on 10 and 11 June 1999. Its final meeting under the German Presidency will be on 25 June 1999. The Finnish Presidency will update the action plans jointly with the Member States and the EU Commission in time for the Tampere special summit.

The prime objective of the action plans is to analyse the political, economic and human rights situation, as well as the underlying causes of emigration and flight from the countries chosen. The action plans contain practical and operational proposals for short, medium and long-term measures for reinforced political, development, economic and humanitarian cooperation with the States concerned; they also take account, in particular, of the UNHCR's concerns and give particular priority to solving the problem of migration, especially that of illegal immigration and illegal residence.

The High Level Group is also working closely with the UNHCR, the ICRC, the IOM and non-governmental organisations in line with its terms of reference. Contributions from these organisations are taken on board in the action plans.

One high-profile example of close cooperation with a country of origin was the visit to Morocco by a delegation from the Group from 3 to 5 June 1999. The delegation held talks there with high-ranking representatives (including five Ministers) of the Moroccan Government and other organisations on the spot. These talks organised by the German Presidency were also attended by the future Finnish Presidency, Spain in its capacity as coordinator for the Morocco action plan, France, the European Commission and Council Secretariat. A meeting was also held in Brussels with the Ambassador of Sri Lanka.