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LIMITE

CIREFI 62

NOTE

from: Greece

to : CIREFI

Subject: Illegal immigration into Cyprus

Delegations will find herewith two notes submitted by Greece concerning the above-mentioned subject, in the framework of the meetings held between CIREFI experts and experts from the CEECs and Cyprus.

NOTE FROM THE GREEK DELEGATION DATED 11 MAY 1998

1. It will be remembered that, in order to prepare the ground for the above meeting as effectively as possible, certain EU Member States expressed a wish to make a contribution by drawing up and submitting to the Council General Secretariat relevant documents concerning the associated countries involved.
2. The Greek delegation is making its contribution in the form of this document on Cyprus, for the purposes of which account was taken of the issues contained in Telex No 663 of 13 February 1998, the decisions taken at the last CIREFI Working Party meeting (11 March 1998) and issues of general interest in the context of CIREFI.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ANNEX A

Combating illegal immigration and smuggling

1.	Legal basis	p. 3
2.	Administrative measures	p. 3
3.	Visas	p. 3
4.	Illegal immigration and smuggling networks	p. 3
5.	Refusal of entry	p. 4
6.	Forged travel documents	p. 5
7.	Expulsions and deportations	p. 5

ANNEX B

Immigration from Iraq and neighbouring countries (Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Iran), China and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

p. 6

ANNEX C

Illegal immigration of Iraqi nationals

p. 7

PROPOSALS

p. 8

COMBATING ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AND SMUGGLING**1. LEGAL BASIS**

In accordance with Article 19 of the 1998 (amending) law on aliens and immigration, anyone assisting a prohibited immigrant to enter Cyprus in breach of the relevant provisions is subject to imprisonment for a period not exceeding three years, or to a fine not exceeding CYP 5 000, or both.

In addition, the court hearing the case has the power to order confiscation of the vessel used to bring the illegal immigrant to Cyprus.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES

There is no provision for the use or exchange of police liaison officers with the countries of origin of the illegal immigrants. However, in the case of illegal immigrants from countries with embassies in Cyprus, the competent services maintain regular contact for help with their repatriation, issuing of passports, provision of tickets, etc.

3. VISAS

In 1996, 38 937 visas were issued free of charge and 39 781 against payment. In 1997, the figures for visas issued were 61 957 and 47 700, respectively.

With regard to the number of entry visa applications rejected overall, the figures are: 20 493 for 1996 and 23 175 for 1997, representing around 30 000 individuals, since individual documents covered more than one person.

4. ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AND SMUGGLING NETWORKS

Illegal immigrants enter Cyprus via the occupied Northern part of the island, and by sea. Aliens use various means of transport, particularly boats, which disembark illegal immigrants at various Cypriot beaches. Via occupied Northern Cyprus, they enter by means of closed entry ports, controlled by the occupying forces. Use of those ports is banned under Cypriot legislation.

The usual routes are as follows:

- (a) Via areas under Turkish occupation, into Turkish-occupied Northern Cyprus, at the ports of Cyrenia and Famagusta, and the airport at Timbos.
- (b) Illegal immigrants usually set out from Lebanon for the Cypriot coast. They set out from Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and from other Arab countries, mainly heading towards Lebanon, from where, upon payment of sums of \$500-\$2000 each to boat-owners, the latter take them to Cyprus illegally.
- (c) A small number succeed in entering Cyprus as stowaways or as crew-members aboard passenger vessels.

Facilitators involved in smuggling illegal immigrants by sea, mainly the owners of vessels, and some of their accomplices have been arrested, given prison sentences and expelled from Cyprus. Eight smugglers were arrested in 1996, and three in 1997; all were Lebanese nationals.

Figures for aliens entering illegally in 1996 and 1997 are as follows:

- (a) **1996:** 65 Syrians, 51 Iraqis, 40 Egyptians, 15 Iranians, 14 Lebanese and 12 Turks. There were also smaller numbers of Jordanians, Tanzanians, Afghans, Tunisians, individuals of undetermined nationality, etc.
- (b) **1997:** There was a drastic fall in the figures for this year, with an overall total of 60, including: 16 Turks, 14 Iranians, 12 Egyptians, 9 Syrians, 2 Iraqis, 2 Lebanese, etc.

This drop is mainly due to the increased coastal policing measures taken, using additional patrol boats.

5. REFUSAL OF ENTRY

In 1996, entry was refused in 5 996 cases, and in 1997, in 3 832.

The main nationalities involved, in descending order of magnitude, were:

1996: 1 164 Iranians, 1 012 Syrians, 388 Egyptians, 312 Russians, 292 Lebanese, 242 Jordanians, 185 Indians, 118 Pakistanis and 118 Nigerians.

1997: 619 Iranians, 414 Syrians, 246 Egyptians, 181 Bulgarians, 177 Lebanese, 150 Jordanians, 102 Pakistanis, 97 Ukrainians and 98 Nigerians.

The main reasons for refusing entry to these aliens was that they did not meet the conditions of entry, that they held forged passports or entry visas, or that they were undesirables.

6. FORGED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

In 1996, there were 42 cases, of which the most serious were as follows:

- 11 Iranians with forged Netherlands passports
- 4 Sri-Lankas with forged Netherlands passports
- 1 Lebanese with a forged Netherlands passport
- 12 Chinese with forged Japanese passports
- 1 Lebanese with a forged Venezuelan passport
- 3 Russians with forged Greek passports
- 1 Iraqi with a forged Saudi Arabian passport
- 1 Latvian with a forged passport from his own country.

In 1997, there were 99 cases, of which the most serious were as follows:

- 12 Pakistanis, 3 Iraqis and 6 Nigerians with forged United Kingdom passports (21)
- 4 Nigerians, 2 Iraqis and 1 Lebanese with forged Netherlands passports
- 7 Pakistanis with forged United States passports
- 3 Iranians, 2 Iraqis and 1 Lebanese with forged Swedish passports (6)
- 3 Iranians, 1 Iraqi and 1 Lebanese with forged Danish passports
- 6 Chinese with forged Japanese passports
- 21 Syrians with forged Syrian passports.

7. EXPULSIONS AND DEPORTATIONS

1. All aliens categorised as prohibited immigrants on the basis of Article 6(1) of Chapter 105 of the Cypriot law on aliens are declared prohibited immigrants, and are expelled from the country. When aliens are detected, they are arrested in accordance with the law on the police and are held for 24 hours. Within that time, reports are submitted to the Immigration Officer, who issues orders for them to be held and expelled; they are subsequently expelled from Cyprus.
2. The problems encountered involve obtaining tickets and seats for their return journey, the payment of repatriation expenses, the issuing of travel documents and the refusal of the persons concerned to return to their countries.

IMMIGRATION FROM IRAQ AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES (TURKEY, SYRIA, JORDAN AND IRAN), CHINA AND THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

1. In 1996, 142 Turks, 6 075 Syrians, 8 450 Iranians, 696 Chinese and 10 767 Yugoslavs entered the Republic of Cyprus lawfully. In addition, illegal entries were made by 12 Turks, 65 Syrians, 15 Iranians and no Chinese or Yugoslavs. In 1997 the figures for lawful entry were: 148 Turks, 5 422 Syrians, 7 936 Iranians, 679 Chinese and 9 216 Yugoslavs; while those for illegal entry were: 16 Turks, 9 Syrians, 14 Iranians, and no Chinese or Yugoslavs.
2. This question has already been answered. The aim of facilitators is to derive financial benefit.
3. The aim of illegal immigrants entering Cyprus is to establish themselves there. Some submit applications to the UNHCR in Cyprus for recognition as political refugees and some of those are recognized by EU countries. Other foreign nationals from the countries in question travel normally to EU countries because they are accepted by the airline companies.
4. The Republic of Cyprus is endeavouring to limit the extent of illegal immigration by patrolling stretches of coastline within its jurisdiction with police launches and aircraft. In addition, staff manning passport control at air and sea ports are given regular training in recognising and identifying false travel documents for the purpose of refusing entry to the foreign nationals holding them.
5. Expelling, removing and denying entry to these foreign nationals entails a financial burden for the Republic of Cyprus, from the time of their arrest up until their expulsion or escorted return to the country of origin. If the persons concerned are not in possession of travel documents, then such documents are issued upon request by their embassies or by the Republic of Cyprus.
6. Problems arise only where embassies and airline companies are involved in permitting the entry of a number of nationals of the countries in question upon their arrival.
7. A major problem is the lawful entry of foreign nationals who fulfil the entry conditions and are permitted to enter the country but who subsequently remain there after expiry of their permit and work illegally in various sectors of the Cypriot economy. There is also the problem of illegal immigrants from the occupied zone, where the Republic of Cyprus cannot exercise any control.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION OF IRAQI NATIONALS

1. The Republic of Cyprus is facing a serious problem with illegal immigrants from Iraq, who travel to Lebanon and from there, having paid a substantial sum of between US \$500 and US \$2 000 per person to facilitators, are conveyed to the Cypriot coast by ship. They are not usually in possession of passports or other travel documents and it is impossible to expel them from Cyprus because of the United Nations embargo on Iraq. The only channel of expulsion is Jordan, which will accept them if they are in possession of valid Iraqi passports.
2. Available statistics for 1996 show 51 people, while for 1997 there were only 2.
3. Cyprus is used only for the purpose of settlement. In some cases, however, immigrants are recognized as political refugees and they then move on to countries which will take them.
4.
 - (a) Only high-speed craft and ordinary boats are used.
 - (b) Iraq – Lebanon, Iraq – Syria, Lebanon – Cyprus, Iraq – Turkey – occupied zone of Cyprus.
 - (c) Illegal entry via the coast or the occupied zone.
 - They usually arrive without passports, travel documents or any other documents.

Only a few have passports.
5. None of the illegal immigrants use the legal channels. Iraqi nationals entering Cyprus legally first obtain an entry visa from the Immigration Officer.
6. Holders of valid Iraqi passports are expelled to Iraq via Jordan, otherwise the persons concerned remain in Cyprus.
7. There have been no such cases.
8. The only means of combating this phenomenon is for the authorities in Lebanon, from which the illegal immigrants come, to exercise stricter control in their country and to check on the owners of the vessels which transport illegal immigrants, in order to prevent and stamp out the phenomenon. As for the occupied part of Cyprus, there is no means of tackling the problem since the illegal regime has already transported thousands of settlers to Cyprus who have established themselves in Greek Cypriot houses.

PROPOSALS

1. We consider that, in order to combat the problem of the illegal immigration of Iraqi nationals effectively, the external frontiers of the European Union should be more heavily manned and strengthened.
2. In addition, technical assistance should be provided for the countries directly involved (i.e. countries from which illegal immigration is more frequent), and the authorities of the countries where the illegal immigrants originate should be made more aware of the problem.

NOTE FROM THE GREEK DELEGATION DATED 8 SEPTEMBER 1998

CURRENT SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION INTO CYPRUS
FOR THE FIRST HALF OF 1998

Further to telex No. 3422 of 24 July 1998, and with regard to the best method of preparing for the discussions in the meeting between the CIREFI Working Party and the CCEE, the Baltic States and Cyprus (9 September 1998), the Greek delegation would like to contribute this document, concerning Cyprus and covering the first half of 1998. In drawing up the document, account was taken of the points raised by the Greek delegation at the corresponding joint meeting on 18 May 1998 under the United Kingdom Presidency.

1. Illegal immigration/smuggling networks

- (a) Illegal immigration, and the usual routes used by illegal networks smuggling immigrants into Cyprus, continue to involve the sea-route via the Turkish-occupied northern part of the island.
- (b) During the first half of 1998, two Lebanese nationals and one Syrian national were arrested for smuggling illegal immigrants. Of these, the Syrian had transported 112 people from Tripoli in Lebanon to Europe using a small boat, which was found adrift 50 nautical miles south of Cyprus. Most of the aliens in question had no travel documents and did not wish to return to their own country; all submitted asylum applications.
- (c) In addition, 29 other people were arrested for illegal entry into Cyprus. They were nationals of the following countries: Syria (19), Romania (2), Lebanon (2), Turkey (3), Iran (1), Russia (1) and Yugoslavia (1).

2. Visas

In all, 29 000 entry visas were issued and about 420 applications were rejected.

3. Refusal of entry

Entry was refused to 2 014 aliens. The five main countries from which the aliens came were:

Iran (260), Syria (2-3), Egypt (164), Russia (86) and Pakistan (59).

Apart from undesirables, the main reasons for refusing entry were possession of falsified travel documents and visas.

4. **Immigration from Iraq and neighbouring countries, China and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia**

The specific and general problems created in Cyprus by the immigration of nationals from the above countries and the measures taken to deal with them are referred to in the Greek delegation's note of 11 May 1998.

With regard to the number of aliens entering Cyprus legally from the above countries during the first half of 1998, the situation is as follows:

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (4 045), Syria (3 506), Jordan (2 896), Iran (2 585), China (510) and Turkey (82).

5. **Illegal immigration of Iraqi nationals**

The problem of the illegal immigration of Iraqi nationals and the parameters governing it continue to be as described in the Greek delegation's note of 11 May 1998.

6. **Falsified travel documents**

No cases have arisen.

7. **Legal basis, administrative measures, expulsions/deportations**

No further information has been received regarding these matters beyond that contained in the Greek delegation's note of 11 May 1998.
