

Brussels, Monday 3 July 2017

Statement on the EU's approach to migration and the case of Italy

Italy's outcry embodies crisis of solidarity among Member States

Caritas Europa strongly condemns Member States' lack of solidarity towards Italy. The country is delivering humanitarian assistance to children, women and men in desperate need who have been forced to leave their home countries. But the heroic task of coping alone with 75% of all arrivals to Europe is becoming too difficult to fulfill without the support of all the other Member States.

The Italian government's recent signs of frustration over the EU's paralysis on migration is clear evidence that Europe's approach to migration is not working. The millions of euros invested in maintaining and expanding Fortress Europe are not and will not stop people in despair from risking their lives to find a safe haven.

"Europe must stop wasting money. Paying to strengthen borders only makes security companies and criminal traffickers richer. It would be cheaper and wiser to invest in efficient integration policies and to set up teams of civil servants that would boost asylum application processes in Member States facing large numbers of arrivals," said Oliviero Forti, Director of the Migration Department of Caritas Italy.

The recent announcement of President Juncker to call for financial and political solutions to support Italy is a step in the right direction. However, the people trapped in the hotspots cannot wait much longer. Europe must take immediate measures to tackle the dramatic situation in Italy, witnessed on-site by dedicated staff and volunteers of Caritas in Italy.

"Some people have been waiting in the hotspots for over two months. Even children are kept there, without being placed in structures that are more suitable for them. Age assessment is always very uncertain and never follows the same protocol," testified a staff member of Caritas in Taranto, where one of the four active hotspots in Italy is located.

The European dream is based on solidarity and respect of human dignity. Europe can show strong global leadership and contribute to a fairer and more humane world by investing in a modern and dynamic welcoming Europe.

Therefore, Caritas Europa recommends **President Tusk** and **President Juncker** to push for:

- Enhanced EU search and rescue operations to save lives and help governmental and civil society sea operations. This includes upholding the non-refoulement principle.
- Opening the ports of all Member States bordering the Mediterranean to share the arrivals.
- Liberating EU budget for technical and financial support for Member States facing difficulties in complying with their duties towards arriving migrants and asylum seekers.
- Creating a new Dublin system that efficiently alleviates pressure on "border countries". This includes creating a permanent solidarity relocation mechanism.
- Stepping up relocation of newcomers from Italy to the other Member States.
- Opening safe and legal paths to Europe that will prevent anyone from risking their life to reach Europe and that will put an end to the business of human-traffickers and smugglers. Europe has many tools at hand to achieve this, such as humanitarian visas, resettlement, community sponsorship, humanitarian corridors and family reunification.
- Stopping deals with countries that do not respect human rights, such as Libya.

For more information, please contact:

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Notes to the editor

- Following an increase in arrivals of migrants to Italy between 24 and 27 June, the Italian government called on the European Commission and EU Member states to support Italy in the management of migration.
- The Italian government threatened to close its ports to boats if other Member states did not open theirs and supported Italy. Negotiations are currently ongoing to find a coordinated approach to migration in the Mediterranean region.
- **Caritas Italy**, through the diocesan Caritas, is working in the main Italian ports in order to help the Italian authorities to disembark all migrants and to support them.
- Through the **Warm Up project**, Caritas Italy is providing clothes and shoes to the boats involved in the search and rescue operations that will redistribute them to refugees during rescue operations.
- In addition, Caritas Italiana is hosting more than 20,000 asylum seekers around Italy.
- Caritas Italy is also involved in the implementation of a humanitarian corridor with Ethiopia in order to provide a safe way to Europe for people in need of protection.

Caritas Italy is a member of Caritas Europa, <http://www.caritas.eu/country/italy>

Caritas Europa is a network of 49 member organisations in 46 European countries and one of the 7 regions of Caritas Internationalis. Our members assist and provide services to millions of people in need. Caritas Europa aims at lifting people out of poverty by empowering them and by influencing unjust structures and unfair policies that keep people trapped in positions of disempowerment.
<http://www.caritas.eu>