

Meeting of the Committees on Foreign and Defence of the national Parliaments of the

Group Med Member-States

in the framework of the Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy

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Remote participation

As earlier speakers have already pointed out, migration is one issue that has spotlighted one of the weaknesses of the European structure. While we have a Community agricultural policy, 30 years after Maastricht and over more than 20 years since the Amsterdam Treaty - with the exception of the Dublin Conventions to which I will return later - we are struggling to establish a genuine Community migration policy.

We have to open our eyes. We have to realise that migration has become one of the most important and decisive factors in maintaining the global geopolitical balance. Migration is not just a natural factor in rebalancing demographics, but it is also increasingly becoming a powerful driver of political and geopolitical pressure and conditioning.

This new situation is therefore clearly demonstrating the inadequacy of the Dublin Treaty that was designed to regulate minimal and occasional flows of asylum-seekers but not to handle such momentous phenomena as we are witnessing today. Continuing to link the obligation of the first receiving state to process asylum applications is tantamount to continuing to apply national solutions to address global problems. The European Union was created for precisely to do the exact opposite.

If Greece had been left to manage the flow of Syrian migrants from Turkey all on its own, the situation would soon have become totally unmanageable, with serious human rights violations and further instability throughout the area from the Balkans to the eastern Mediterranean. It has been precisely the intervention of the European Union, despite not being particularly timely and in spite of the loss of lives and tensions as we all remember, that has enabled the crisis to be managed with substantial respect for the rights and dignity of the refugees while maintaining the stability of the area.

However, we must face the fact that these are volatile and fraught situations. They are the product of decisions that are always taken to cope with emergencies, with the water up to our neck - as we say in Italian - and for this very reason they demonstrate the total absence of any real and structured EU migration policy.

Just think of the tensions created last winter over the Balkan route on the border between Bosnia and Croatia, or the more recent events that even involved the border between Belarus and Lithuania. This is proof that migration flows not only affect the Mediterranean, but

concern us all, as citizens of the European Union, and therefore not only and not so much as citizens of one or other nation state.

We have to face up to this reality, and take on our responsibilities. Migration routes are increasing in number, instability is rising, and the countries who have an interest in threatening Europe and dividing it are exploiting the lives and the hopes of people who have lost all hope, as bargaining chips both to strengthen their own internal power and to redefine new international balances through blackmail.

The signs we are seeing from the new Taliban government in Afghanistan are exactly along these lines. Humanitarian corridors are a good temporary humanitarian solution. But Europe cannot be asked to intervene as a humanitarian superpower just to stem international emergencies. We are asking Europe to develop a geopolitical strategy for migration, and ultimately bring all its legal and political pressure to bear on protecting the dignity of every human being and international stability.

For these reasons, we must call with great determination for the Dublin Treaty to be superseded and drive forward the new guidelines expressed by the President of the European Commission, Ursula Von De Leyen, a year ago, on the Europeanisation of reception and repatriation mechanisms and the introduction of effective solidarity procedures between the countries of Europe.

With regard to asylum-seekers, we must condemn the decisions taken by some partner countries in recent months to issue unilateral regulations on the right to asylum. On the contrary, it is important for the message that will emerge from this conference to state clearly that we cannot move forward at sixes and sevens, but that we need a single, coherent, Community legal framework governing the right to asylum.

And this has become all the more important today, seeing what has been happening in Afghanistan. The European Union alone will have the strength and the ability to negotiate the establishment of safe and reliable humanitarian corridors jointly with the UNHCR.

This might well be the opportunity we need to finally test a European reception policy. And in this connection, Italy's model of involving and supporting the local authorities, and especially the municipalities, could offer the very European approach to reception which, over time, will be able to fully integrate migrants and asylum-seekers.

Piero Fassino

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