



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Ursula von der Leyen
The President

Brussels, 6 March 2023
Ares (2023) 1483300

Dear Prime Minister,

I appreciate you writing to me following the tragic shipwreck off the coast of Calabria. I fully share your view that as Europeans, politicians, and citizens we have a moral duty to act to avoid similar tragedies, which unfortunately occur all too often. This latest tragedy must therefore serve as a call to redouble our determination to bring effective and lasting solutions.

It is true that migration is a complex and ever-changing reality. It is a challenge that we struggle to meet, and which needs fundamental and comprehensive solutions. These can only be found when acting together. Over time, we have proven that when we do act together, the EU can manage migration. For example, the millions of Ukrainians fleeing Russia's war leading to the largest displacement on our continent since the second World War. Thus, it is clear that migration is a European challenge that requires a European solution.

Advancing on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum is essential if we are to break the cycle of piecemeal solutions that do not bring sufficient progress. Central to the approach proposed by the European Commission is managing migration by acting upon the different strands of our policies in a holistic manner: helping those in need of international protection, preventing irregular departures, fighting criminal smuggling networks, offering pathways for safe and legal migration, and returning those with no right to stay.

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*Giorgia Meloni
Prime Minister of Italy*

*Cc:
Charles Michel
President of the European Council*

*Ulf Kristersson
Prime Minister of Sweden*

As you rightly point out, while we work to achieve agreement on a common legislative framework, the EU can act. That is why I set out immediate operational steps in the run-up to the last European Council. I was encouraged by the reaction, and in particular, the commitment shown by Italy to work closely together. I would like to underline some of the most relevant areas for action, also drawing on the Central Mediterranean Action Plan now underway.

First, we must coordinate our actions with key partners to prevent irregular departures and save lives at sea. To this end, the Commission is working closely with Member States to intensify cooperation with key partners in North Africa. The EU and Italy have been working together for many years to strengthen border management as well as search and rescue capacities. Our joint action has built up capacities for international protection and migration management in North Africa and further afield along the main migratory routes. As part of our programming of EU funds this year we will once again give priority to this work, with a particular focus on Tunisia and Egypt. We will also provide further support to Libya's maritime border management and search and rescue capacities and step-up complementary actions to strengthen control of its land borders with Egypt.

I count on our continued partnership and on your commitment to a Team Europe approach. This does not only provide the means for effective action, but it strengthens our ability to act consistently and reliably with key partners. Vice-President Schinas and Commissioner Johansson are working closely with their respective counterparts in Member States, jointly engaging with partner countries in a Team Europe approach. This will lead to joint missions to key partner countries, in particular Tunisia and Egypt.

Second, we should focus our efforts on those in need of international protection by providing them real alternatives to putting their fate in the hands of criminals. The work of Italy and others to offer safe and legal pathways to vulnerable people through humanitarian corridors makes a critical contribution. We will provide at least half a billion euros in funding for resettlement and humanitarian corridors until 2025, offering support to resettle around 50 000 persons. We will continue to prioritise safe and legal avenues from Libya and Niger by strengthening the Emergency Transit Mechanism and offering Assisted Voluntary Return opportunities for those not in need of protection as part of our wider engagement with the EU-African Union-UN Task Force. In addition, to supporting emerging models built on the humanitarian corridors experience, in January, the Commission launched a targeted funding call under the Asylum, Migration, and Integration fund for community sponsorship. We will have an opportunity to discuss more in detail on these solutions at the upcoming EU Resettlement Forum in May, including how to continue supporting at the EU level Italy's experience with humanitarian corridors.

Building on the existing cooperation with partner countries such as Niger and Morocco, where we launched Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships in July last year, we are working to launch two new Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships with Tunisia and Egypt, supported by Europol and Eurojust. These partnerships aim to strengthen the legal, policy, operational and strategic frameworks in partner countries in response to migrant smuggling and to increase the ownership, impact, and long-term sustainability of their efforts in a structured way. These will be underpinned by funding of a new North African multi-country programme to step up action against smuggling in the region.

Third, to work together on a more coordinated approach to search and rescue, the Commission relaunched the European Contact Group on Search and Rescue as part of the Action Plan on the Central Mediterranean. The group offers a forum to promote cooperation and coordination among national authorities and I was pleased to learn of Italy's strong engagement. Building on the first meeting of the group, discussions will continue to set up an enhanced cooperation framework for search and rescue amongst concerned coastal and flag States. I can assure you that the Commission will continue to give a high level of priority to this strand of work.

At our next European Council in March, I intend to provide a state of play of the work underway on the operational measures that I proposed in February. The support and contributions from Member States, including Italy, are greatly appreciated. This is the only way to ensure that our action will make a real difference on the ground.

Yours faithfully,



Ursula von der Leyen