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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by Romano Maria La Russa

on behalf of the UEN Group

on the situation of refugees in Malta

European Parliament resolution on the situation of refugees in Malta

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular Article 1 thereof on the inviolability of human dignity,
- having regard to Council Directive 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers, which entered into force on 5 February 2005,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 ('Dublin II') establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country,
- having regard to Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the visits by a delegation from its Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs to temporary holding centres in the EU, in particular the visit to Malta on 24 March 2006,
- whereas the Isle of Malta is located at the southern borders of the EU and is a little island of 316 km²; whereas it has a population of 400 000, with a density of 1200 people/km²; whereas it has a limited capacity to take in migrants and asylum seekers,
- whereas the yearly average number of migrants arriving in Malta equals 45% of the birth rate in Malta and one arrival in Malta would be equivalent to 140 in Italy, 150 in France and 205 in Germany,
- whereas Malta spends 1% of its GDP on immigration policy and uses a substantial part of its army and police bodies to deal with humanitarian crises,
- whereas Malta is not the final destination of migrants,
- whereas the Maltese authorities do not have enough personnel to process asylum seekers' applications and migrants are detained for 18 months before their cases are decided upon,
- whereas temporary detention in 'open centres' is always preferable to detention in real detention centers, as was illustrated by the tragedy in Ceuta and Melilla,
- whereas the European Union should make every possible effort to help Malta and the other EU border countries which have similar difficulties,

1. Expresses solidarity with the Maltese authorities, security forces and population, who are faced with the serious problem of illegal migration and recognises the difficulties that Malta is encountering;
2. Welcomes the efforts made by the Maltese authorities to deal with the migratory emergency in a transparent way, thus letting the delegation from the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and the press have free access to the centres;
3. Is worried, however, about the unacceptable living conditions of migrants in the temporary holding centres in Malta;
4. Calls on the Maltese authorities to reduce the migrants' detention period considerably;
5. Calls on the EU to play a major role in handling humanitarian crises concerning migratory problems and asylum seekers, and calls on the Commission to propose the creation of an emergency fund to help in humanitarian crises occurring in the Member States;
6. Considers that Member States should demonstrate greater solidarity towards those Member States suffering from migratory arrivals;
7. Urges the Commission to take an initiative as soon as possible with a view to revising Regulation (EC) 343/2003 ('Dublin II'), in order to reconsider its basic principle, namely that the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application is the country of first entry, which places an unbearable burden on countries in the south and east of the EU, and establish a fair mechanism for distributing responsibilities among Member States;
8. Calls on the Council to adopt with Parliament, as soon as possible, the Return Directive, which establishes minimum standards for the conditions of illegal migrants' detention in the EU;
9. Reiterates its call for a Community immigration policy that takes into account the size, hosting capacity and geographical location of border EU Member States, especially when dealing with the allocation of funds;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.