

**Question for written answer P-011464/2013
to the Commission
Rule 117
Fabrizio Bertot (PPE)**

Subject: Tragedy off the coast of Lampedusa

The tragedy which occurred off the coast of Lampedusa in the early hours of Thursday 3 October is only the latest in a long series of such incidents which have claimed the lives of hundreds of migrants. Since the outbreak of the revolution in Libya, human trafficking has substantially increased and criminal gangs, mostly made up of ex-soldiers who served under the Kaddafi dictatorship, are operating unhindered. In the last two weeks alone, 45 boatloads of migrants, totalling 5 583 individuals (3 807 men, 703 women and 1 073 children) have landed on Italian shores. The migrants are chiefly of Syrian (2 075), Eritrean (1 280) and Palestinian (428) origin. According to investigators, most of them come from refugee camps in Kenya, Tripolitania or Sudan, having been preyed upon by criminal gangs extorting as much as \$2000 per voyage, only to find themselves enduring inhuman conditions of transport on highly unseaworthy craft.

The situation has now become unsustainable, with Italy unable to deal with such a massive influx of illegal migrants alone. In 2004, the FRONTEX agency was set up for the international monitoring of EU external borders. It currently has 26 helicopters, 22 aircraft and 113 vessels to patrol all European coasts.

In view of this:

- Does the Commission not consider a substantial increase in FRONTEX resources and manpower to be necessary for the monitoring of traffic between the Libyan and Italian coasts, enabling it to intercept as many clandestine vessels as possible and prevent any further tragedies occurring in these waters?
- Does it not consider that it should initiate moves to renegotiate its bilateral agreements with third countries along the Mediterranean, especially in Africa, with a view to striking at the heart of criminal organisations, commencing with the ports of departure, so as to prevent vessels carrying migrants from taking to the open sea?