

IOM International Dialogue on Migration 2012
13-14 September 2012

SPEECH OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT FOR IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM

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In addressing the challenges posed by the phenomenon of migration in the Mediterranean area, Italy is aware that it has a foreground role to fulfil and that complex factors distinguish its situation from other Countries of the European Union. On account of its geographical situation Italy is particularly exposed to the entry of migrants and is an outpost of the Old Continent which has to face flows originating especially from the coasts of Northern Africa.

For this reason, on the one hand, Italy is committed on a European level, to improve the common legislation in the area of migration and asylum and on the other hand, it has acquired a set of international instruments for the cooperation in controlling irregular migration on the part of North African and Sub-Saharan countries, in exchange for training and equipment for the police forces, vocational training and access to employment, etc. Today, for example, Italy is the European country that has concluded the highest number of readmission agreements (more than thirty).

The Mediterranean is the Southern border and the external frontier of the entire European Union and should be perceived as such by all Member States. Accordingly, it is necessary that the European Union strengthens the mechanisms of financial solidarity towards the States affected by massive inflows of refugees, including to effectively accomplish their duty of receiving international protection seekers.

If all this is true, then I believe that, at present, it is necessary to maintain the so-called structural system of first reception.

The Administration I represent is working in the forefront to try and improve these facilities despite the scarcity of economic resources.

A further issue with a special importance, and which has been increasingly coming to the forefront in the last few years, is the arrival of mixed flows of migrants including economic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees from war areas or highly destabilised regions.

Reference is made here to Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, but also to Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia and, in general, to the highly unstable African countries.

To give an idea of the extent of this phenomenon, it is enough to say that the number of aliens landing on the Italian coasts throughout 2011 amounted to 62,692.

Since the beginning of this year (as of 01/09/2012) the mixed flows of irregular migrants and would be asylum seekers who arrived by sea amounted to 7,848 (excluding those arriving through land frontiers). 40% of the latter come from countries characterised by considerable political instability or by generalised violence to such an extent that the recognition of international protection can be considered.

Country	2012 (as of 01/09)
Tunisia	1,789
Somalia	1,248
Afghanistan	1,180
Egypt	986
Pakistan	714
Syria	369
Bangladesh	251
Eritrea	410
Nigeria	160
Iraq	97
Other	644
	7,848

In total, the applications submitted to the Territorial Commissions have tripled. 34,117 in 2011 as against 10,052 in 2010.

Legal framework for the management of migration in normal time

The general lines of public policies in the sector of immigration from third countries are laid down in Italy by legislative decree No. 286 of 25 July 1998 denominated Consolidated Text on Immigration and the Status of Aliens.

As far as the internal legislation is concerned, the non-refoulement principle is fully and completely recognized (art. 19 of the Consolidated Text on Immigration). This principle is a cornerstone of international humanitarian law which is based on the European Convention of Human Rights and which has been constantly confirmed by the Court of Strasbourg and by community legislation. National Authorities must comply with this principle in carrying out their functions.

I am aware that in some cases the conduct of the Italian Authorities may have been drawn into discussion in the light of the accurate application of this principle especially in connection with sea patrolling operations.

Although it exists in doctrine, I do not intend to take part in the debate concerning what is allowed in international waters and what is not. What I wish to point out is, that joint patrolling as is carried out by FRONTEX, and in which the coastal States also take part, is the exercise by the coastal State of its legitimate duty to control its own waters and to prevent illegal departures.

As to the recognition of international protection, 10 territorial commissions and 13 section operate on the national territory

Set of rules for the management of migration in the event of crises

In order to tackle the emergency in North Africa stemming from the revolutionary upheavals within the so-called “Arab spring”, Italy implemented the rules provided for by the Civil Protection law no. 225 of 1992, intended to tackle emergency conditions. This instrument permits the derogation of the laws in force and the tackling of an unforeseeable situation with the necessary flexibility.

If we consider the high number of arrivals in the first eight months of 2011, the Italian Civil Protection system reacted positively to the humanitarian emergency through the Plan for the reception of migrants with the aim of ensuring the first reception guaranteeing an equal distribution over the Italian territory among the 19 Italian regions (with the exception of Abruzzo) and providing for the assistance of refugees and migrants coming from North African countries.

The national Plan – which is also a liaison instrument for State administrations, Regions, Local Bodies and operating structures – is divided into different regional levels for the implementation of assistance measures at a local level.

Inter-State Cooperation

Migration is a more and more complex phenomenon which can be more effectively tackled through a unity of goals and efforts. This is particularly urgent in the Mediterranean area, which in the last years has been the scenario of emergency conditions demanding a global and integrated approach for the management of the migratory phenomenon.

In fact, besides the reception of migrants, a specific action with Tunisia with regards to border controls and to returns, and with Libya, with which a Verbal Process. An administrative agreement defining a whole series of initiatives aimed at supporting the requests for assistance made by the Libyans.

It is of the utmost importance the commitment taken on by the parties in order to ensure that the treatment of migrants and their stay in the reception centers fully comply with the safeguards provided for by the main international instruments with regard to the protection of human rights.

However, the game cannot be played only on a bilateral level, since the Italian role must be seen from the standpoint of the Union’s southern border.

Therefore, we consider it necessary to integrate the efforts of all EU Member States to concretely implement the principle of solidarity also with regard to burden sharing.

A tighter cooperation with the southern Mediterranean countries is also indispensable, through development programs related to the commitment in the fight against illegal migration and in border control.

In this respect, I would like to remind you that last February 2012 the 5+5 dialogue of countries of the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean was resumed. It has now become the so-called “dialogue of 10 countries” in order to testify a renewed unity and common goals of the countries. The dialogue has the aim of making transitions easier in countries involved in the so-called Arab Spring. As Minister Terzi stated “it is necessary to act promptly through concrete aids and long-term strategies”.

Within the framework of the relationships between the European Union and third-countries we must point out is the commitment to negotiate readmission agreements with EU border countries and with countries of origin and transit of migratory flows; the request made to the FRONTEX agency to improve the management of external borders also through the development of “practical cooperation” with the Third-Country Authorities; the strengthening of dialogue related to visas, if necessary through the negotiation of EU agreements to facilitate the issuing of such visas.

Special emphasis must be placed on international protection and asylum policies and we suggest to continue to give priority to Countries bordering the European Union, to East Europe Countries and to African partners, through the adoption of the so-called “tailor made” strategies, that is, specifically fitting for each country with which negotiations are set up, and inspired by the principle of “more for more” (which implies a compensation in terms of a concrete commitment by the partner State for the incentives received).

Finally, I would like to express the hope that the migration phenomenon might be more and more regarded as a structural and permanent figure, which is necessary to work on, both on a national and European level, first of all, and then on an international level. To develop far-sighted and wide-ranging policies that take into account the essential role played by legal migration in Italy and in other European countries.

Thank you for your attention!

Angela Pria