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Protect People in Need while Protecting National Borders

Caritas Europa's Call to the European Union after the Lampedusa tragedy

On the occasion of the European Commission's President José Manuel Barroso's visit to Lampedusa today, Caritas Europa's Executive Board urges EU Member States to protect people in need while "protecting" national borders. The current EU and international legal framework, although not perfect, gives the EU and its Member States the instruments to prevent tragedies such as in Lampedusa last week, but the political courage is lacking.

All EU Member States have the **obligation to save and rescue** people at sea and to bring them to safety. While the EU is currently negotiating a **Regulation on Sea Border Surveillance**, Caritas Europa urges Member States to guarantee that the rights of asylum seekers and migrants are secured during operations at sea, either under the flag of an EU Member State or Frontex.

"The EU cannot claim to be the champion of human rights if the Member States don't get their act together and save lives, by putting human dignity first," says Erny Gillen, President of Caritas Europa.

Caritas Europa's Executive Board, at its meeting in Brussels on 8-9 October, takes note of the EU Council's discussions yesterday, where the Council expressed the wish to avoid such tragedies. The Board reminds the EU Council that one way to achieve such a goal is to put in place **resettlement and humanitarian corridors** for people stranded in North Africa. Caritas Italiana, member of Caritas Europa, is active in Lampedusa assisting the migrants and the local population.

Caritas Europa urges Member States to act together and strengthen their joint commitment on EU level in negotiating the next Multi-annual programme on justice and home affairs, to be adopted by the end of 2014 under the **Italian EU Council presidency**. The programme must contain strong guarantees that the Member States' commitments will be translated into action, such as:

- safeguarded access to an asylum procedure,
- significant resettlement quota in every EU member state, and
- more EU support to addressing refugee crises outside Europe.

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