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[Press release](#) | 08.10.2013

Lampedusa tragedy/asylum policy

EU border policies must focus on saving lives and be accompanied by coherent asylum policy

Commenting on the outcome of this evening's council meeting of EU home affairs ministers and ahead of tomorrow's European Parliament debate on the tragedy in Lampedusa, Green migration and asylum policy spokesperson **Jean Lambert** (UK Euro-MP) said:

"The EU cannot continue to allow tragic loss of human life in its coastal waters. Despite the outpouring of rhetoric from ministers and bigger political groups in response to the latest tragedy in Lampedusa, concrete proposals remain absent. EU governments and politicians have consistently blocked attempts to ensure EU border policies can focus on saving lives at sea and deciding which countries take responsibility for those saved: they have also failed to ensure that those seeking refuge can access asylum systems safely. Therefore, it is hard to take such rhetoric at face value.

"New EU rules on the surveillance of sea borders are currently under discussion in the European Parliament and Council but EU governments are again pushing for limited provisions for assistance in the case of emergencies. This is not acceptable and must be immediately redressed. EU governments must finally take their responsibility to prevent these avoidable tragedies off Europe's coast. This implies equipping the relevant agencies with a mandate and means to fulfil this role. The Commission must urgently outline proposals to this end.

"There is also a need to finally make a common asylum system a reality and, provide for a more humane treatment of those coming to Europe seeking refuge and asylum, and ensure that EU member states share responsibility for this. The EU should also use the possibilities of a humanitarian visa or planned resettlement, which provide a proper system for those willing to take grave risks to come to Europe for refuge. This means finally committing to a common asylum system, not a deterrence system."

The European Parliament is also set to debate the situation of Syrian refugees and adopt a resolution on the EU response. EU home affairs ministers also adopted conclusions to this end. Commenting ahead of the EP vote, Green migration spokesperson **Judith Sargentini** added:

"The scale of Syria's humanitarian crisis is alarming, with over 2 million estimated refugees and 4.5 million internally displaced. The European response so far has been minimalist and disorganised, with most EU member states abdicating responsibility and accepting miniscule numbers of refugees. There is an urgent need for a proactive and coordinated EU response, which is aimed at accommodating far greater numbers of

those fleeing the war in Syria, which the West has done nothing to stop. Activating the EU's temporary protection directive would be a crucial step to this end and we urge the European Commission and member state governments to prioritise this."

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