



## **I T A L Y**

**STATEMENT BY H.E.  
AMBASSADOR MAURIZIO ENRICO SERRA  
AT THE 67<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME  
(GENEVA, 3-7 OCTOBER 2016)**

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Thank you Chair,

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the EU Delegation on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Let me thank the High Commissioner for his riveting opening remarks and you, Chair, for your skilful guidance throughout your tenure.

With a total of USD 24.5 million pledged so far for 2016 for major crisis situations in Africa, the Middle-East and Asia, Italy has not failed to show its support and solidarity towards the millions of people of concern to UNHCR and will continue to do so even next year. With regard to the Syrian crisis in particular, the Italian Cooperation has contributed, from 2011 to-date, some EUR 84 million, including aid for over four million Syrian refugees in Libya, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.

We are witnessing a turning point in human history and the United Nations Secretary-General's presence in this Assembly yesterday as well the various high-level events that have taken place this year are there to remind us of the importance of putting in place a more strategic and effective humanitarian response to the growing numbers of displaced persons.

From the “Commitment to Action” of Istanbul to the “New York Declaration”, the notion of responsibility and burden-sharing is the central moral tenet of today’s approach to human mobility. With this in mind Italy has promoted – inter alia through the “Migration Compact” proposed to our EU partners – a plan for developing an effective partnership with African countries of origin. Our Minister of Foreign Affairs Paolo Gentiloni, who recently participated in the ‘High-Level Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants’ of the 71st UN General Assembly, reiterated the need for tackling the root causes of migration and for expanding investing capabilities aimed at maximising support to the beneficiary populations in the African region. In his words : “The future of Europe is in Africa”; “we should invest in Africa because it means investing in our own future”.

We would also like to recall the first “Italy-Africa Ministerial Conference” held in Rome on 18 May, which was attended by top ranking government and institutional officials, including High Commissioner Grandi himself, and during which our President of the Republic highlighted the role played by Italy as the bridge between Africa and Europe.

Lastly, Italy launched in Rome, in November 2014, a very relevant initiative better known as the “Khartoum Process” and is one of the co-founders of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Migration in Africa introduced at La Valletta Summit last November.

UNHCR recently warned that 2016 looks set to become the deadliest year on record for refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean, mainly from Libya, to reach Europe. Images of sunken vessels and of human suffering have yet again haunted our minds in recent months. It is widely known that my country is on the front line of Europe's worst immigration crisis since World War Two, actively engaged, also within the framework of EU cooperation mechanisms, in massive rescue operations on the central Mediterranean route. Thousands of lives have been saved, among others, by the Italian Coast Guard, bearing in mind

that over 320,000 boat migrants came to Italy from North Africa between 2014 and 2015.

As Italian House Speaker Laura Boldrini marked the third Anniversary of a migrant boat disaster yesterday on the Island of Lampedusa, over 6,000 migrants were rescued in a single day under the coordination of the Italian Coast Guard halfway between Sicily and the Libyan coast. At least 9 migrants died but the incident could have turned into yet another human tragedy. The shocking news about fatalities in the Mediterranean are of course an undeniable reality we all have to live with but thankfully success stories are also part of that reality. While I am taking this opportunity to restate Italy's full support to and cooperation with UNHCR in the hope to avert further loss of lives and to fight trafficking and smuggling of human beings more effectively, I would like to warmly congratulate our Greek friends for the success of both the Hellenic Rescue Team and of Efi Latsoudi, joint winners of the UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award 2016.

Last but not least, High Commissioner, allow me to express my deepest satisfaction for having you on the podium today at your first session of the Executive Committee since your appointment. Our sincerest thanks and gratitude also go to your dedicated and courageous staff on duty around the world, risking their lives every day to assist those in need and leave no one behind.

Thank you for your attention Chair.