Asylum and migration: plans for origin and transit countries (Afghanistan, Albania, Iraq, Morocco, Somalia, Sri Lanka)

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In line with the Council's wishes expressed in December 1998, the High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration has proposed a draft Action plan for Iraq which includes: - an assessment of the political situation in the country ; - statistical information and information and information on the causes of migration and flight of the Iraqi population (in particular, the Kurds) to the Union; - an inventory of measures and actions undertaken by the Member States and the Community in order to address the needs of these people. This report outlines the measures taken by intergovernmental organisations (UNHCR, ICRC) and NGOs in order to help these people, as well as providing a concrete evaluation of the situation in the country which has been impoverished by 10 years of very strict economic embargo and civil war between the Kurds and the Iraqis. It should be noted that amongst most of the people who have managed to leave Iraqi territory, it is the Kurds who have been able to reach Europe the most easily through Turkey. Finally, the report presents a series of measures to be taken in the future by the European Union with view to the situation in Iraq, accompanied by an implementation timetable. These measures are divided into two, the first concern Iraq as such, and the others concern the North of the country where the Kurds are mainly based. Concerning Iraq, the report shows that it is necessary to continue the actions initiated in 1998 in the European Action Plan framework for Iraq, which included an intense dialogue with the Turkish authorities on the fate of Kurds concentrated at their borders (refer to procedure document COS /1998/2045). Furthermore, a bilateral dialogue between the EU and Iraq must be maintained so as to evaluate the possibility of creating European actions in this country. Other initiatives are foreseen, such as development aid and humanitarian aid (through ECHO) with the view to stop the spread of poverty among the Iraqi people following the economic embargo. With regard to migration, the report considers that an effort must be made with a view to better evaluating the migration flow (with the exception of the Kurds) coming from Iraq towards Europe. As far as Kurds in the north of Iraq are concerned, the report proposes the setting up of development actions aiming to create infrastructures and local employment. With regard to migration, efforts should be made to allow the NGOs to help the Kurdish people on their territory. Lastly, the Council is hoping for the launch of negotiations with Turkey regarding the repatriation via this country of Iraqi asylum-seekers, mainly Kurds, who want (or not) to voluntarily return to Northern Iraq.