Migrants from Iraq and the neighbouring region: EU action plan adopted by the Council on 26.01.1996

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OBJECTIVE: to propose a plan of action at European level to respond to and reduce the influx of immigrants into the Community from Iraq. SUBSTANCE: Given the constant influx of refugees from Iraq into the Community, the Council decided to propose a programme of action centred on the following: 1) consideration of the causes and origin of the problem: this must be discussed with the Turkish authorities who are also concerned. 2) more effective distribution of humanitarian aid: the Commission should assess the humanitarian aid situation and improve the organization of projects in this area together with the UNHCR. 3) asylum procedures: it is necessary to improve the supply of information concerning asylum seekers and consider how facilities for them can be improved using Community funds. On the basis of the information received, Member States could establish whether their own laws or national practices regarding asylum procedures need to be reviewed. 4) prevention of abuse of asylum procedures: under the provisions of the Dublin Convention Determining the State Responsible for Examining Asylum Applications, Member States could consider adopting the common response to asylum seekers from Iraq who have no identity papers. Pending the establishment of EURODAC (European system for the Comparison of the Dactyloscopic Records of Asylum Seekers), Member States could adopt bilateral arrangements for the comparison of their fingerprints. 5) measures to combat organized crime: the Europol Drug Unit (EDU) will be called upon to consider the possible impact of these migrants on recruitment by criminal organizations. According to the information gathered, a number of joint crime prevention projects could be envisaged with the support of the multidisciplinary group on organized crime. 6) measures to combat clandestine immigration: initially, information will be gathered on procedures for issuing visas in the various Member States and, if necessary, steps taken to modify these procedures. Measures could be taken to ensure that those concerned receive adequate training in the detection of false documents and in border control procedures (particularly at airports), e.g. as part of the Odysseus Programme (CNS 97909). In the long term, the Council is considering a proposal regarding airline liaison officers. Experts could be sent to the third countries concerned with the agreement of that country to assist with controls on land and at sea. In addition, a common strategy will be adopted to penalize those responsible for transporting passengers travelling without documents or with falsified documents. Procedures are also being envisaged for return of clandestine immigrants in cooperation with Member States and the third countries concerned with which readmission agreements could be concluded involving transit countries also. 7) review procedures are also envisaged with regard to the programme of action.