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## EU Member States urged to honour their commitments on migrant relocation and hotspot expert deployment

*We will continue working for a comprehensive response, aimed at curbing uncontrolled migration flows while protecting the rights of migrants and refugees in full compliance with the EU and international law*

On behalf of Malta's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Minister for Home Affairs and National Security Carmelo Abela visited the Moria migrant camp on the Greek Aegean island of Lesbos. He was joined by European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos and Greek Minister for Migration Ioannis Mouzalas.

In comments to the press at the end of the visit, Minister Abela urged EU Member States to step up their efforts to fulfil the commitments they took in September 2015 to alleviate the migratory pressure on Greece and Italy by relocating 160,000 people in clear need of international protection from those two countries by September 2017. With the deadline fast approaching, the total number of relocations has not yet surpassed the 14,000 mark. On its part, Malta has already taken in 111 of the 189 relocations it pledged.

On the 28th February of 2017, together with Commissioner Avramopoulos, Minister Abela sent a letter to all Ministers responsible for Home Affairs in the EU Member States urging them to improve their relocation efforts. That letter also reminded Member States to respond to the regular calls for the deployment of experts to the hotspots and to the relevant operations. Member States will be reminded of these two messages at the forthcoming Council meeting for Home Affairs Ministers in Brussels at the end of March, said Minister Abela.

Minister Abela remarked that although Malta is more directly affected by the Central Mediterranean migratory route rather than by the Eastern Mediterranean one, both as part of its EU Presidency role and as an EU Member State, it truly believes in the value of European solidarity, and that it wants this visit to be an expression of European solidarity with Greece.

"Migration is a common challenge that demands a common, comprehensive approach," he said. "We will continue working for a comprehensive response, aimed at curbing uncontrolled migration flows while protecting the rights of migrants and refugees in full compliance with the EU and international law. We will strive to make sure that no Member State is left alone to shoulder extraordinary migratory pressures. This is Malta's commitment as part of its EU

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Presidency, one that will remain so in its role as a Member State after June 2017.”

Minister Abela commended Minister Mouzalas and Lesvos’ leadership for the work that has been carried out in the camp over the past weeks, while expressing his certainty that there will be further improvement. He also had words of praise for the staff deployed by EASO, Frontex, and humanitarian organisations. It is important to alleviate the situation on the Aegean islands in the best interest of the migrants and the inhabitants, he said.

On Lesvos Minister Abela was accompanied by Malta’s Ambassador to Greece Joseph Cuschieri and Commissioner for Refugees Martine Cassar.



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