



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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“I/A” ITEM NOTE

from:	General Secretariat of the Council
to:	Coreper/Council
Subject:	European Union Declaration on the 60th Anniversary of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

With a view to marking the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Presidency suggests to submit a Declaration of the European Union to the ministerial-level meeting of all Member States of the United Nations which will be held on 7-8 December 2011 in Geneva.

The text of the draft declaration has been discussed by the Justice and Home Affairs Counsellors at their meetings on 15 and 30 September 2011. After a subsequent written round of consultation, on 10 October, the Presidency was able to announce in the Strategic Committee on Immigration Frontiers and Asylum that no delegation had raised an objection of substance to the circulated text.

Given that no outstanding issues remain, the Presidency invites the Committee of Permanent Representatives to endorse the text which appears in Annex in view of adoption without discussion at the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 27-28 October 2011.

**Draft European Union Declaration
on the 60th Anniversary of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees**

In order to mark the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the European Union, founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity and fundamental rights, reaffirms its commitment to this unique instrument as the foundation of the international regime for the protection of refugees.

The European Union recalls its commitment to the development of a common policy on asylum based on the full and inclusive application of the 1951 Convention, and reaffirms its attachment to the absolute respect of the right to asylum, as recognised in particular in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

The European Union underlines the progress it has achieved in this respect in the last ten years: the completion of the first phase of the creation of a Common European Asylum System, the establishment of the European Refugee Fund and of the European Asylum Support Office, enhanced practical cooperation, reinforcement of the rule of law guided by the case-law of European courts competent in the area of asylum. The European Union reiterates its commitment to further developing the Common European Asylum System based on high protection standards combined with fair and effective procedures.

In further developing the external dimension of the Common European Asylum System, the European Union remains committed to expressing solidarity with third countries, inter alia through voluntary resettlement programmes, whilst continuing its efforts to promote and help building capacity in close cooperation with the UNHCR and other international actors to handle protracted refugee situations in these countries.

The European Union calls on all States that have not yet done so to accede to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol, and calls on those States which have made geographical limitations and others reservations to reconsider these, so as to ensure universal application of its provisions. In this respect, the European Union recalls the Stockholm Programme of 1 December 2009 which states that, subject to a report of the Commission on the legal and practical consequences, the European Union should seek accession to the Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

The European Union recognises the unique mandate of UNHCR and the importance of its efforts to protect and promote durable solutions for refugees and other people in need of international protection who are of its concern. It notes the significant importance for Contracting States to cooperate with UNHCR in order to facilitate its duty of supervising the application of the provisions of the 1951 Convention and coordinating international responses to protect refugees and handle protracted refugee situations. The European Union stands ready to continue its work in close partnership with UNHCR in order to ensure effective international protection and assistance. In this respect, the European Union acknowledges the important role of UNHCR in the provision of humanitarian assistance to refugees.

In this anniversary year, the European Union reaffirms its strong commitment to assist and protect, in accordance with international obligations, all those men, women and children, who are compelled against their will to leave their homes and their countries in order to escape fear of persecution.