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## Press Release

.../for immediate release

### **Joint Statement by Commissioners Malmström and Georgieva on World Refugee Day, 20 June 2010**

World Refugee Day is an occasion to turn our thoughts to the millions of people around the world who have no choice but to leave their homes because of persecution and conflict.

It is also the occasion to remind ourselves that offering asylum to those who need it is an obligation, deriving from Europe's long tradition of humanitarianism and its international commitment to protecting the weak and vulnerable.

Over the last few years, the EU has put in place legislation to ensure minimum levels of support, procedural guarantees and rights for asylum seekers and refugees in all EU Member States.

Despite the progress made, wide divergences still exist in national asylum systems across Europe: but it is not acceptable that in a European Union based on common values and principles, the chances of obtaining protection due to all human beings under European and international law differ radically from one country to another.

That is why the Commission recently put forward a series of initiatives to create a Common European Asylum System with common rules based on high standards of protection for people seeking protection from dangerous situations in their home countries.

At the same time, as we are currently seeing in Kyrgyzstan, the Commission is providing humanitarian relief to refugees around the whole world. At the end of 2009, there were around ten million refugees on the planet and more than twenty seven million internally displaced persons. Refugees and internally displaced persons are among the most vulnerable people in humanitarian crises. This is why the Commission allocated more than €218 million in 2009 and 2010 to help more than 22 million refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons around the world.

The United Nations has decided to use "Home" as a theme for this year's World Refugee Day. Meeting asylum seekers, displaced persons or refugees on the field, one can see how meaningful this word is for them. Home is what they've lost; home is what they don't have; home is where they want to go back to. These people are among the most vulnerable in the world and, as such, need our help. They did not choose such a life. Their dream is to return to their homes and be able to live and work in peace and security. Unfortunately, with the continuous escalation of conflicts, and the increase of natural disasters due to climate change, this dream may prove difficult to fulfil. The World Refugee Day is a good occasion to transmit a clear message: Europe does not forget you. We will continue to stand ready to provide the bare necessities to lead you to a decent life, building up the feeling that you are not alone and the warmth of home is closer.

Europe is currently confronted with one of the worst economic downturns of its recent history, but that should not allow us to forget the plight of refugees around the world and in Europe. Europe should remain committed to building a system worthy of the proud traditions of which we are a part: a tradition of tolerance, welcome and shelter.

We hope that we can all support World Refugee Day in different ways: whether it is by participating in one of the many activities organised in our countries; or by simply remembering that many in Europe faced similar journeys in the not too distant past. Protecting those fleeing persecution has contributed to make Europe what it is today.

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