

Beat: Politics

European Parliament calls for urgent measures to save lives

In the Mediterranean Sea

Brussels, 29.04.2015, 18:21 Time

USPA NEWS - The EU should do everything possible to prevent further loss of life at sea, e.g. by expanding the mandate of Triton operation in the Mediterranean to include "search and rescue operations at EU level", says a resolution voted by European Parliament on Wednesday.

MEPs also call for a binding quota for distributing asylum seekers among all EU countries, bigger contributions to resettlement programmes, better cooperation with third countries and tougher measures against people smugglers. Parliament urges the EU and its member states to establish a clear mandate for Triton, "so as to expand its area of operation and increase its mandate for search and rescue operations at EU level." Triton is coordinated by the EU border agency Frontex and currently extends only 30 nautical miles from the Italian coastline.

The EU and its member states should ensure that "search and rescue obligations are effectively fulfilled," stresses the resolution, which was approved by 449 votes to 130, with 93 abstentions. Parliament calls for "a robust and permanent humanitarian European rescue operation, which, like Mare Nostrum, would operate on the high seas and to which all member states would contribute financially and with equipment and assets". MEPs urge the EU to co-fund such an operation.

EU countries should also continue to show solidarity and commitment by stepping up their contributions to the budgets and operations of Frontex and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), MEPs add. Parliament also undertakes to provide these agencies with the resources (human and equipment) needed to fulfil their obligations "through the EU budget and its relevant funds."

The resolution calls for closer coordination of EU and member state policies in tackling the root causes of migration and more cooperation with partner countries in the Middle East and Africa. It also calls for the strongest possible criminal sanctions against human trafficking and smuggling and urges member states and EU agencies to work more closely to detect and trace these criminal networks' funding and identify their modus operandi, so as to prevent them from making money by putting migrants' lives at risk.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-3956/european-parliament-calls-for-urgent-measures-to-save-lives.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Jose A. Martin

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA

(702) 943.0321 Local

(702) 943.0233 Facsimile

info@unitedpressassociation.org

info@gna24.com

www.gna24.com