



Executive Summary of UNHCR's Recommendations to the Czech Republic for its European Union Presidency (January – June 2009)

UNHCR remains seriously concerned that current laws and practice mean that persons in need of international protection are not necessarily able to find it throughout the European Union. The incoming Czech Presidency has committed itself to achieving further progress towards establishing a Common European Asylum System (CEAS), which entails improving the standards for refugee protection across the EU.

In order to address gaps in existing asylum laws, the Czech Presidency is encouraged to prioritise discussions in the Council on key proposals from the European Commission (EC) for the revision of the Dublin and Eurodac Regulations and the Reception Conditions Directive. The Presidency is urged to ensure the outcome of negotiations among the Member States are consistent with international refugee and human rights law.

Member States have called for a European Asylum Support Office (EASO) to facilitate practical cooperation among national asylum authorities, to achieve greater harmonization and better quality in asylum decision-making. Given its supervisory responsibility regarding implementation of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees – which the Council has identified as the basis of the CEAS – it is essential that UNHCR has a formal role in relation to this support structure. The Czech Presidency is urged to support such a role for UNHCR, as it works to achieve substantial progress on the EASO proposal in early 2009.

The JHA Council has recently reaffirmed the importance of resettlement as a means to achieve durable solutions for many vulnerable refugees. The Presidency is encouraged to support efforts to increase resettlement from other regions to the EU, including through swift implementation of the November 2008 JHA Council Conclusions on resettlement of refugees from Iraq.

EU responsibility-sharing mechanisms within the EU could contribute to ensuring more effective implementation of the CEAS by all Member States. The Czech Presidency is encouraged to explore ways to develop solidarity measures to assist Member States faced by particular pressures, to help them meet their obligations more comprehensively.

Significant barriers continue to obstruct the free movement and enjoyment of rights throughout the EU by people needing international protection, as underlined by the Member States' recent failure to agree on amendments to the Long-Term Residence Directive. The Czech Presidency is urged to take up this pressing problem as a matter of priority.

Without effective access to the territory of the EU and the asylum procedure for persons seeking international protection, the CEAS will fail to meet its central purpose. It is hoped that EU discussions on migration management, including at the Presidency-led Ministerial conference on 'Building Migration Partnerships' in April 2009, will acknowledge the vital need to ensure that responses to migration challenges incorporate safeguards for people seeking asylum in the EU.