

# Press Release

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### **PACE Rapporteur calls on European states to take up the issue of mass arrival of migrants and welcomes the steps taken by Italy**

Strasbourg, 04.09.2007 - At the end of a two-day visit to Lampedusa, the Rapporteur on mass arrival of migrants and asylum seekers of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Morten Østergaard (Denmark, ALDE), has commended the Italian authorities on the steps they took to rescue and receive thousands of boat people arriving during the summer from the north coast of Africa.

"The Italian authorities have taken important steps in the last two years to improve the reception conditions for the boat people arriving on the island, or having been brought there after a rescue at sea," the Rapporteur commented. "81 people were rescued at sea and brought to Lampedusa this morning, bringing the total number of arrivals to over 9000 this year."

"The authorities can be particularly congratulated for completing a new reception centre to house the irregular migrants and asylum seekers in dignity and humanity," the Rapporteur continued. "They have also, at the request of the international community, developed a partnership with organisations such as UNHCR, IOM, MSF and the Red Cross to ensure that those arrivals in need of international protection, and those in a particularly vulnerable situation, are catered for."

The Rapporteur however raised some concern at the speed at which many of the arrivals were processed, recommending that "this speed should not be at the expense of those in need of international protection and medical assistance, whether they be refugees, victims of trafficking, minors, or others."

The Rapporteur called on European states to help shoulder the burden of dealing with mass arrivals on Europe's southern shores. "States such as Italy, Malta, Spain, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus, by dint of their geographical location, should not be left to shoulder the burden of these irregular migration channels."

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).