

Joint Statement by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Chancellor Sebastian Kurz

Greece and Austria enjoy long and friendly bilateral relations. On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the migration-crisis both heads of government issue a joint statement with a focus on illegal migration and Turkey's activities in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

Both countries have both been massively affected by the migration-crisis since 2015, in fact more than most other EU member states. Greece still faces immense challenges with respect to the protection of its external borders as well as by providing accommodation and medical care for tens of thousands of asylum seekers in Greece. Austria has received more than 200,000 asylum-requests since 2015 as one of the EU's main countries of destination. The reception systems of Greece and Austria therefore both face unprecedented burdens. Austria and Greece therefore reiterate the need to fight illegal migration via all routes, such as the Eastern Mediterranean Route, which means helping the countries along this route and working closely together with countries of origin and transit.

Austria is also providing aid and support to Greece on a bilateral basis. Austria has already sent police officers to help Greece protect the EU's external border bilaterally and as part of FRONTEX. The Austrian government is also offering Greece two million euros for the accommodation and medical care of migrants on the islands. Furthermore, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz reiterated his full support for Greece when it comes to Turkish gas explorations in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea which are in clear violation of international law. This matter will be discussed at the next European Council meeting in Brussels on 24/25 September where all options need to be on the table.

STATEMENT PM KYRIAKOS MITSOTAKIS

„Greece and Austria are steadily reinforcing their cooperation in dealing with the migratory and refugee questions, as two members of the EU significantly affected by the challenge. Together with Chancellor Kurz we share the determination to effectively protect the EU's external borders which are, as it has been rightly pointed out, borders equally of each member state of the Union, and to resolutely tackle illegal migration. Greece was recently congratulated for being the shield of Europe.

Thanks to the continuous support by our European partners, Austria being among the first, we remain committed in safeguarding the European borders against any threat able to undermine the security and social cohesion of our countries. Greece as a front-line EU country and Austria as one of the EU's main countries of destination will continue to work towards consolidating a common and efficient European policy on these questions. Share responsibility, concrete solidarity and fair share of the burden are three fundamental and mutually reinforcing pillars of any coherent migrant and asylum policy. Today we are confronted with new destabilizing acts by Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean. We need to collectively face up these new provocations as European Union. In this regard, we call for the respect of international law and good neighbourly relations”.

STATEMENT CHANCELLOR SEBASTIAN KURZ

"I want to commend Greece and in particular Prime Minister Mitsotakis for their extraordinary efforts to protect the EU's external borders and fight illegal migration. The EU must do move to help countries such as Greece to protect the EU's external borders as well as when it comes to returns.

Austria is always ready to send more police officers to Greece or provide other forms of support. Let me be clear, we must not be blackmailed by Turkey or other third countries. Regarding the EU's general approach to illegal migration, we must make sure to send a clear signal to potential illegal migrants, destroy the business model of people smugglers and stop the drowning in the Mediterranean sea. The EU must also stand by Greece's side when in view of Turkey's breaches of international law in the Eastern Mediterranean sea and take decisive action. This issue will be discussed at the next European Council where all options need to be on the table."