

STATEMENT

ORU Fogar calls for the recognition of the regions' role in the refugees' crisis Europe.

The massive influx of refugees, heightened as from 2015, is the greatest humanitarian crisis in Europe since the Second World War. This forced migration of victims of armed conflicts, persecutions, poverty or massive violation of human rights has its origin mainly in Syria and Afghanistan, but it is also the consequence of a number of issues in the Middle East and Africa. The figures are confusing, but 2 million people might have crossed the Mediterranean seeking refuge in the European Union. Several thousand people have died in the attempt.

Against this background, ORU Fogar considers it necessary to express:

First, a commitment to the principle of solidarity. This means to bring assistance, urgently and without delay, to persons in a situation of extreme suffering, need and emergency, fleeing war.

Second, a commitment to responsibility. It needs to be assumed that this situation compromises human rights and human dignity.

Third, a commitment to legality. In this crisis, the whole world is bound by the Geneva Convention of 1951, by article 14 of the Declaration of Human Rights and, European, by article 18 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Thus, the regions and regional networks gathered in the 2016 ORU Fogar Assembly in Rio de Janeiro urge all actors to commit to respond swiftly and effectively to the humanitarian crisis.

At the same time, they call for a greater recognition of the role of regions in this crisis, as well as greater recognition of the role of the local world. While the quota of refugees allocated to each state was being discussed, many European regions had to deal with emergency situations in their territories, making efforts to face this harrowing humanitarian tragedy under a terrible pressure. Frequently regions, with the collaboration of cities and towns, have provided initial assistance and have been obliged to cover the basic needs of refugees, in terms of food, medicines and accommodation.

Many other regions, less affected by the immediate emergency, have expressed their willingness to receive refugees and have sent humanitarian aid to the camps in Greece and Turkey.

In this context, and in line with the declaration made by the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CRPM), regions should be able to be recipients of asylum, migration or integration European funds, especially if these funds are dedicated to hous-



ing, health, social support, education and integration in society. We welcome the adoption of emergency instruments by the European Union, with budgets allocated to cover the basic needs of the people arriving to Europe. However, regions should also have legitimate Access to these programs. We call for regions to be able to participate and benefit from these programs by 2017 and 2018, since regions have more knowledge and experience to face immediate and long-term emergency situations.

Also, ORU Fogar's Assembly urges all actors to promote peace processes at the centre of the conflicts that generate mass exodus. The global regional world must place its government experiences – which recognise diversity and constitute an exercise in democracy – at these actors' disposal as a contribution to peace. This must be done based on our conviction that both the development of decentralised states recognising their internal diversity, and the respect for dialogue and the democratic will, can be a useful vehicle for managing conflicts in a democratic manner.

Rio de Janeiro, 13 de abril de 2016.