

SEABORNE MIGRATION: FROM SHIPWRECKS TO SOCIAL HOUSING

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Following meetings between European leaders aimed at identifying means of reducing the flow of migrants into southern Europe, the U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon has stated that there is no military solution to migrants drowning in the Mediterranean.

Secretary General Ban's comments came after the worst shipwreck in decades of dangerous seaborne migration caused the deaths of over 700 people and forced the European Union into pledging more money for rescues.

Ban told the Italian newspaper *La Stampa* that the United Nations would support the effort to address the problem but that as regards Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi's proposal to "*capture and destroy*" the traffickers' vessels the U.N. would rather focus on security and protecting human rights.

The Secretary General stated that: "*There is no military solution to the human tragedy playing out in the Mediterranean,*" adding that "*It is crucial that we take a holistic approach that looks at the root causes, at security and the human rights of migrants and refugees, and have legal and regulated immigration networks.*" While Ban cannot be faulted in his analysis of the root causes, European leaders require a solution to the situation immediately.

Last week's meetings concluded in a decision to triple funding for European Union naval searches in the Mediterranean, however, no real progress was made on how to deal with the long-term issues, first and foremost the distribution of asylum seekers amongst the 28 European Union member states.

One issue of particular concern is housing migrants once they have arrived in Europe. This is a particularly hot political potato as many European citizens strongly oppose assisting migrants believing that it encourages illegal migration. This is particularly accentuated in those areas where public services and spending have fallen victim to recession imposed budget cuts.

The housing problem is particularly serious in Italy where, according to the European Union Dublin Treaty, migrants –illegal and non– must be afforded housing under the concept of the country of arrival being responsible for their welfare.

Italy remains the prime objective for those crossing the Mediterranean despite the fact that the vast majority of migrants fleeing countries in regions such as sub-

Saharan Africa and the Middle East wish to move on to northern European countries.

Although many of the migrants wish to leave Italy, asylum requests can take over a year to be confirmed and in the meantime the Italian State has to guarantee decent conditions for those living in reception centers.

Angelino Alfano, the Italian Interior Minister, has said that Rome was working on a substitute for the Dublin treaty. Defining it as "*obsolete*", Alfano added that "*We are working to construct a common system which goes beyond the Dublin treaty, which is now obsolete in practice, making the mechanism less rigid and more collaborative.*"

It remains to be seen exactly what proposals Alfano's Ministry and fellow legislators develop, however, there can be no doubt that Italy cannot be left to deal with an ever greater problem alone.