Reclaiming Liberalism: Shaping a modern liberal approach to migration

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party convening in Budapest, Hungary on 19-21 November 2015:

Having regard to:

- the theme resolution 'Liberal Responses to the Challenges of Demographic Change' adopted at the ALDE Party Congress meeting in Helsinki, Finland on 15 October 2010;
- the resolution 'In Defence of Schengen' adopted at the ALDE Party Council meeting in Dresden, Germany in May 2011;
- the ALDE Party's seminar on 22 March 2015 'Reclaiming Liberalism: Shaping a modern liberal approach to migration';
- the urgency resolution 'Towards a New Asylum and Migration Policy for Europe' adopted at the ALDE Party Council meeting in Oslo on 8-9 May 2015;
- the ALDE Blueprint for a new European Agenda on Migration as presented on 23 April 2015;

Considering that:

- migration has been an integral part in human history;
- migrants are claiming their inherent and undeniable right to live in peace and freedom. They are entitled to the pursuit of happiness like all other human beings. Governments should feel committed to protect these rights;
- if people are forced to leave both their home country and familiar cultural environment due to existential threads, they generally move to countries where they are expecting maximum freedom and liberty as well as economic wealth and material prosperity in order to shape their life best.

Migration and the Principle of Freedom of Movement

Notes that:

- the free movement of people within the EU is vital for continued European integration and prosperity and calls for the rights of all EU citizens from old and new member states to be harmonised as soon as possible, notably the right to work in all member states;
- the legal migration of skilled third country workers into and between member states to complement the workforce of member state nationals remains an important way to maintain Europe's workforce, stimulate

research and innovation and ensure the EU's global economic competitiveness;

- a substantial number of people migrate for reasons of marriage and family reunification and that countries should support the right to private and family life, and welcome these migrants without discrimination e.g. based on sexual orientation. Member states have to ensure that these migrants integrate successfully and notes that it is at local level that integration succeeds or fails and therefore the policies implemented by local politicians are crucial;

Considers that:

- at numerous times in recent years the EU asylum and migration system has been shown to be unfit for purpose and needs a fundamental rethink;
- that a coherent European approach differentiating between the various categories of claimants, linking internal and external policy on asylum is needed, based on a long term and liberal vision;
- a European approach to integration should be developed so that best practice is spread across the continent to facilitate and develop capacity to the arrival and integration of migrants into new communities and avoid instances of tension and unease;
- individuals naturally seek social and economic wellbeing and that the European Union presents opportunities for this;
- the European Union also has a responsibility to rethink and consider why its current approaches of economic and political cooperation have not contributed to improving the conditions in developing countries and addressing the root causes of migration;

Calls for:

- upholding of the principle of freedom of movement, the promotion of effective external border controls, and to oppose any introduction of permanent internal border controls between Schengen member states, regardless of their scope, focus or intensity;
- the creation of flexible immigration systems, in line with the Stockholm Programme, that are responsive to the needs of each member state and which enable migrants to take full advantage of their skills and competence. To meet demographic challenges and address future labour immigration needs, we call for extending the scope of the EU blue card to cover both skilled and non-skilled workers and to act as an EU wide work permit based on objective criteria;
- an economic migration points-based scheme where the needs of the labour market are matched by the supply of talent worldwide could serve as an example for such a new European policy;

- liberals across Europe to actively and firmly address perceived stereotypes with facts in the context of public debate.

Fighting irregular migration

Notes that:

- immigration rules are not the same in every EU country and that, for example, all final decisions on migrant applications or on rules on long-term visas (stays for periods longer than three months) are taken at Member State level;
- in light of the shortcomings of this patchwork of 28 different national systems, the European Parliament has repeatedly pointed to the need for a comprehensive EU approach to migration;
- individual European member states and local and regional authorities are not able to address the challenge of illegal migration on their own;

Considers that:

- the current responses some EU member states and governments to irregular migration flows are insufficiently based on facts and therefore the solutions presented are equally insufficient;
- trust between member states in recent years has been undermined by certain unilateral actions in response to irregular immigration;
- the EU's external policies and development cooperation policy with third countries do not focus enough on the root causes of migratory flows nor link in sufficiently with EU home affairs policies;
- irregular immigration and human trafficking into the EU will be made less attractive if there are safe and legal entry possibilities for applicants and proper return and readmission mechanisms;

Calls for:

- a common, fair, and humane framework for legal migration to Europe that allows for safe and legal possibilities for asylum seekers to enter Europe. This policy needs to differentiate between the various categories of claimants;
- the creation of information centres in countries of origin such as Cigem in Mali. Such centres help to promote the mutual gains of legal migration, to discourage illegal migration, and to strive for a better understanding of the migration processes;
- an increase in political efforts and dialogue in the context of migration policy between the EU, countries of origin for EU migration and transit countries to help support governments of EU partner countries with the fight against organised crime and trafficking;

- the effective control of external European borders and the expansion of the mission and budget of FRONTEX with concern to the refugees' health and human rights.

Asylum

Notes that:

- asylum is a fundamental right first recognised in the 1951 Geneva Convention on the protection of refugees and that granting it is an international obligation to people fleeing persecution or serious harm in their own country and therefore in need of international protection;
- asylum flows are not constant, nor are they evenly distributed across the EU, and the number of asylum applications is an increasing challenge;
- the current EU asylum and migration systems consist of a patchwork of pre and post Lisbon Treaty measures that are not always properly funded, with little internal coherence, no functioning system for responsibility-sharing, and little visibility for the citizens;

Considers that:

- the existing 'Dublin' system for allocation of responsibility is based on the principle that asylum applications should be made and processed in the first country of arrival, which creates an unequal distribution between Member States, an incentive for Member States not to cooperate, and putssignificant pressure on Member States with external borders;
- European Union Member States have a shared responsibility to welcome asylum seekers in a dignified manner based on universal human rights and principles of non-discrimination respectful on ethnicity, religion, gender, age or sexual orientation, ensuring they are treated fairly and that their case is examined to uniform standards respecting the rule of law;

Calls for:

- EU member states to replace the Dublin system by a permanent mandatory relocation mechanism in which every country in the European Union hosts its fair share of refugees. This European approach, coordinated by an enhanced EASO (European Asylum Support Office), would promote responsibility sharing between member states whilst keeping the integrity of the asylum system;
- the establishment within this responsibility sharing mechanism of a distribution system that would broadly take into account the profession, background and individual choice of each refugee;

- increased joint efforts to combat human trafficking, for which greater cooperation with the UN should be sought;
- EU Member States to develop a new European policy that creates safe and legal entry possibilities for asylum seekers as well as proper return and re-admission mechanisms;
- EU Member States to aim at developing safe and sustainable reception capacities in the First Asylum Country and providing lasting prospects and adequate procedures for refugees and their families until return to their country of origin is possible;
- the European Union to develop common European legal and humanitarian standards for asylum proceedings; Members States and the EU to ensure that asylum seekers are able to file a request at European embassies around the world;
- EU and its Member States to play a more active in early conflict prevention as well as taking measures that encourage a more harmonious economic and political development in potential conflict areas;
- the effective control of external European borders and member states to expand the mandate and budget of FRONTEX so it can carry out effective search and rescue missions at sea;
- the ALDE Party in the European Parliament and the European Committee of the Regions to advocate and incorporate this modern liberal approach to immigration and asylum in their legislative work at every available opportunity.