

## **Joint Statement**

### **Czech Support to the Hellenic Republic to Enhance the Security of the External Borders of the European Union**

The Czech Minister of the Interior Mr. Hamáček and the Ambassador of Greece Mr. Efthymios Efthymiades, on behalf of the Ministry of Citizen Protection, signed today in Prague a Memorandum of Understanding on the use of the financial donation in the amount of 27 million CZK (or 1 million euros) to the Hellenic Republic, approved by the Czech Government on 29 June 2020 to support security of the EU external borders.

Since the migration crisis in 2015, the Hellenic Republic has been facing persistent pressure on its EU external borders. Most recently, in February and March earlier this year, Greece reacted decisively and proportionately, in accordance with European and international law, when thousands attempted to illegally cross the borders into Greece, in breach of the provisions of the 2016 EU-Turkey Agreement.

Despite a decrease in arrivals of migrants during the spring months of 2020 caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of arrivals to Aegean islands starts to rise again, and the migration pressure is anticipated to persist and even increase in the coming months. So far in 2020, more than 10.500 migrants have arrived to Greece either across the land or the sea border.

The Czech Republic has been among the first EU member states to send material aid to Greece after it activated the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) in March 2020 following the increased migration pressure on the Greek – Turkish land border during February and March 2020. Moreover, in March 2020 the Czech Interior Minister Jan Hamáček offered Greece a specific financial support to help alleviate the migration pressure and enhance security on the EU external borders. Through this gesture, the Czech Republic would like to show solidarity with the Hellenic Republic whose asylum and migration system capacities have been heavily challenged for many years. Greece appreciates the support demonstrated by the Czech Government, which also reflects the feelings of the Czech public opinion, and is grateful for the multitude of letters and e-mails of support by Czech private citizens in this regard.

The financial donation of the Czech Republic will be received by the Ministry of Citizen Protection of the Hellenic Republic, and will be used for purchase of surveillance transport facilities (surveillance vehicles, outboard small vessels and plastic boats) and other equipment (e.g. thermal cameras, night vision equipment, communication systems) that will serve the Hellenic Police to enhance EU external borders surveillance and patrolling activities both on the land and the sea border.