Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations
Office and other International Organizations
in Geneva

Call for inputs by the Special Rapporteur on human rights of migrants
Report on the **"Externalization of migration governance: new trends and specific aspects",**
to be presented to the Human Rights Council 62nd Session, June 2026

Contribution of Greece

With reference to the call for inputs by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants concerning aspects of the "externalization of migration governance", we would like to highlight the following brief points, further to our letter No. AS 1322, dated 17 November 2025 (attached for ease of reference), and in addition to the elements already set out therein:

1. In general, it should be noted that Greece implements a comprehensive national migration and asylum policy, supported by a structured legal, administrative and infrastructural framework, with ongoing coordination and oversight at the EU level. Within this framework, institutionalized reception and international protection procedures are in place, and mechanisms exist to ensure access to protection and compliance with human rights obligations under both EU and international law. The system includes dedicated arrangements for the identification, registration and protection of vulnerable individuals, in particular unaccompanied minors, through established mechanisms such as the National Emergency Response Mechanism, which forms part of Greece's national child-protection strategy. This policy framework reflects sustained alignment with EU standards and close operational cooperation with EU agencies, enabling Greece to participate fully in the common European asylum system.

2. Greece does not implement bilateral measures relating to the externalization of migration governance. There is no externalization agreement or arrangement between Greece and any third country; consequently, no data deriving from practical implementation is available.

Greece will duly implement the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, including provisions on mutually beneficial partnerships with third countries, in full compliance with international and EU law and with full respect for human rights (including recital 5 and Articles 5, 6(3)(j) and 56(3)(b) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 – AMMR). Greece actively participates in EU-level discussions on innovative solutions to counter and prevent illegal migration, with the assistance of EU agencies and international organizations, within the framework of their respective mandates and in full respect of international law, the principle of non-refoulement and the human rights of migrants.

3. With regard to the 2016 EU-Türkiye Joint Statement, as already explained in letter AS 1322/17.11.2025, Greece's involvement is exercised in full respect of the procedural rules of the EU Treaties, international law, and in line with the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights.

As regards its impact, available data indicate that irregular arrivals decreased by 97% in the first two years and by 94% in the first four years following the Statement's implementation, compared to the preceding period, while the number of lives lost at sea decreased substantially. Furthermore, since 2011 the EU has mobilized EUR 12.5 billion to support refugees in Türkiye and host communities, targeting persons genuinely in need of international protection.

The implementation of the Joint Statement has been effective regarding the reduction of flows of persons reaching the EU through Türkiye, but its provisions have not been met by the Turkish side. More specifically, as mentioned in the above-mentioned letter No. AS 1322/17.11.2025, the Joint Statement foresees that all persons, whose application has been rejected by the Greek authorities as unfounded or inadmissible, crossing from Türkiye to the Greek islands as of 20 March 2016, will be returned to Türkiye, in accordance with international obligations and the respect of the principle of non-refoulement. However, the Turkish side consistently refuses to accept the vast majority of the above-mentioned persons. Thus, between April 2016 and February 2025, only 2.140 migrants have been returned from the Greek islands to Türkiye. At the same time, more than 43.815 Syrian refugees were resettled from Türkiye to the EU. In fact, as the Turkish authorities have not revoked their decision of March 2020 to suspend return operations under the Statement following the COVID-19 pandemic, no return operations have taken place since then, despite repeated requests from the European Commission and the Greek authorities.

4. Concerning the application of the **Safe Third Country (STC) concept,** Greece applies it in a manner that fully respects applicants' individual circumstances and their human rights, as enshrined in international law and the jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the ECtHR. The national legal framework guarantees each applicant the opportunity to rebut the presumption of safety in their specific case. This framework has already been reviewed and evaluated in the context of a national annulment procedure against the national list of STC by the highest national annulment Court (Council of the State), the Plenary session of which (see Council of State Plenary 177/2023, section 34), examining the compatibility of this specific legal provision with the relevant EU Directive, ruled that: *"it complies with the requirements of the provision of Article 38(2) of Directive 2013/32/EU, since it establishes a system which provides (Article 86(2)) for the application of the concept of "safe third country" both "on a case-by-case basis and for each applicant separately" and for the establishment of a national list of safe third countries, which includes the countries classified as "generally safe" for certain categories of applicants for international protection".* Indeed, in par. 2 of article 91 of law 4939/2022 it is provided that: "*The presence of the above criteria is examined on a case-by-case basis and for each applicant separately, unless the third country has been classified as generally safe and is included in the national list of safe third countries. In the latter case, the applicant for international protection may object to the application of the concept of safe third country, citing as a reason the fact that the third country is not safe under the specific circumstances in which he is found".*

Within this framework, Greece strictly applies the criteria for designating safe third countries, in line with EU law and relevant Council of Europe recommendations. The STC list constitutes a procedural tool facilitating the efficient processing of applications, without undermining substantive protection guarantees.

The principle of non-refoulement is strictly observed and applied without discrimination. It is ensured that no person is returned to a country where they may face persecution, torture, or inhuman or degrading treatment. The Hellenic Coast Guard and Hellenic Police fully comply with national and international legal provisions and procedures regarding the protection of human rights of migrants and asylum seekers. Their personnel follow systematic training programs - often in cooperation with UNHCR and the Fundamental Rights Officer

of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum - covering access to asylum, legal remedies and respect for human dignity. Allegations of misconduct are subject to oversight, disciplinary procedures and investigation, including through cooperation with Frontex.

Since 2020, Greece has continuously upgraded its reception and identification infrastructure, enhancing registration capacity and efficiency. Newly arrived third-country nationals undergo identification and registration in Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) or Closed Controlled Access Centres (CCACs), where they are provided with material reception conditions and comprehensive information on their rights, including the right to apply for international protection. Medical screening aims to promptly identify persons with special reception needs, allowing for tailored support, referrals and specialized services.

5. Regarding the potential impact of migration management measures on persons in vulnerable situations, Greece maintains a robust national legal framework in line with international and EU requirements for the protection of vulnerable persons. With regard, in particular, to recently enacted law 5226/2025 on return procedures (which modifies the transposition of the Directive 2008/115/EC), guarantees against return are provided for persons in vulnerable situations, such as minors who attend school and the persons who have their custody, persons over 80 years old, victims or material witnesses of specific criminal acts, victims of domestic violence, pregnant women during pregnancy and for six (6) months after childbirth.

In the case of unaccompanied minors, a best-interests assessment is mandatory prior to any return decision, and authorities must ensure return only to family members, legal guardians or appropriate reception facilities. Unaccompanied minors are promptly registered, provided with access to healthcare, reported to the National Emergency Response Mechanism and assigned a legal guardian. The “HELIOS+” program ("Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection and Temporary Protection"), facilitates access to housing, employment, and essential documentation needed for legal residency and integration. Refugees can also refer to "Migrants Integration Centers" and other suitable services in Greece to enhance their integration prospects. Asylum seekers that are homeless or in precarious living conditions can request, during their full registration, a referral to appropriate facilities through the services of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum (MMA). The HELIOS program, (launched in 2019 and completed in 2024), is Greece's first nationwide initiative, implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in collaboration with national authorities, providing comprehensive support for the socio-economic integration of beneficiaries of international and temporary protection.

In addition, Greece has strengthened its fundamental rights safeguards through the establishment of the Special Committee on Fundamental Rights Compliance and the appointment of a Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO) at the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. A Fundamental Rights Complaints Mechanism has been operational since September 2023, ensuring accessibility, independent assessment and follow-up investigations of alleged violations. The FRO conducts regular on-site visits and stakeholder consultations across the territory.

6. Greece complies fully with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), transposed into national law by Law 4624/2019, including in the field of migration and asylum management. Public authorities processing personal data of migrants and refugees are bound by strict principles of lawfulness, transparency, purpose limitation and security. Greece also participates in EU-level information systems, which incorporate data-protection safeguards within interoperable border and asylum management frameworks, thereby contributing to the prevention of human-rights-related risks arising from data processing.

In conclusion, Greece approaches migration governance within a clearly defined legal and institutional framework that prioritizes respect for human rights, international protection obligations and the rule of law. Its engagement at national and EU level seeks to ensure effective migration management while safeguarding the rights of migrants and refugees, particularly those in vulnerable situations. Greece remains committed to constructive cooperation with the United Nations, EU institutions and international partners, and to the continued strengthening of mechanisms that ensure accountability, transparency and full compliance with international human rights standards.