

Athens, 21 January 2020

Dear Minister,

With this letter, the below signatory humanitarian, human rights and protection organizations would like to congratulate you on taking up your new post as Minister on Migration and Asylum and wish you every success in your term. We would also like to welcome your intention to establish an EU mechanism that shares responsibility of welcoming refugees and migrants.

However, we can only express deep concern at the fact that, in recent months, the public health system remains inaccessible to thousands of asylum seekers, migrants and their children, with serious consequences to their well-being and public health. Withdrawing the right to the social security number (AMKA), thus annulling newcomers' right of access to health care, coupled with overcrowding in the islands - as a result of the geographical restriction - and prolonged inadequate living conditions in refugee camps across the mainland, have led to an unprecedented, unacceptable situation, in violation of fundamental human values, national and international law.

Moreover, the Greek Government, while announcing its priorities on migration, consistently fails to include the protection of people, the respect for their rights and the promotion of their integration. The lack of adequate and humane living conditions for asylum seekers, the difficulty in accessing a fair asylum process and the absence of long-term planning for their effective reception and integration, as well as the fragmented and ad hoc approaches, should give place to coherent and integrated solutions based on human dignity. We hope that your ministry will be able to achieve this.

Having been at the forefront of the so-called "refugee crisis", offering assistance to the Greek State and the refugee population, the signatory organisations know that improving the asylum, reception and integration system in our country is possible. Greece can meet the needs of the asylum seekers that reach its borders seeking protection, fulfilling its legal obligations but also ending the vicious cycle it has found itself in, with a long-term strategy that takes into account both the benefits of integration of refugees and the needs of the local host communities.

On the basis of all of the above, we ask you to:

Immediately restore access to primary health care to everyone who has arrived since July 2020 and continues to arrive, by restoring access to the social security number (AMKA), by activating the Temporary Number of Insurance and Health Care number or any other equivalent scheme.

- Review the existing legal framework (Law 4636/2019) of the asylum procedure, including by amending the provisions on the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the fast-track border procedures and in expanded use of detention, the provisions on