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## UNITED4RESCUE – OUR COALITION STATEMENT

Thousands of people have died on the European external border. We must not allow this to continue. Saving people in distress at sea is a humanitarian obligation and a responsibility of governments. All those who have drowned on their way across the Mediterranean have been seeking protection and a dignified future for themselves and their families. They have left their home countries to escape persecution, war, poverty, injustice and the effects of climate change.

Our action coalition United4Rescue is convinced that every person in distress at sea must be rescued. We therefore support the civil search and rescue organisations that do not stand idly by as people drown but take humanitarian action, saving lives when there are no public rescue operations. We represent a broad range of bodies in society – refugee and human rights organisations, welfare agencies, companies, trade unions, churches, cultural associations, sports clubs and schools, along with social movements and local voluntary initiatives.

We share the belief that a human rights-based migration and refugee policy is possible. We expect convincing solutions from the European Union (EU) governments.

**I. Rescuing people in distress at sea is an obligation:** Maritime search and rescue (SAR) is an obligation under international law and the right to life is non-negotiable. The EU and its Member States must guarantee this on the Mediterranean.

**II. No criminalisation:** Civil SAR operations must no longer be obstructed or treated as a criminal offence.

**III. Fair asylum procedures:** Refugees arriving by boat must be taken to a safe place where they have access to a fair asylum procedure. The EU Member States have made this commitment. The *non-refoulement* principle is binding under international law. Accordingly, people must not be turned away and returned to countries where they are in danger and have no rights.

**IV. Enable safe havens:** Cities and communities wishing to accommodate additional refugees must be allowed to do so.