

STATEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF MALTA

With reference to public statements made by Italian Deputy Prime Minister Luigi Di Maio with regard to the migrants on *SeaWatch 3*, the Government of Malta states that the NGO boat in question conducted the rescue of the said migrants in a location which was outside the search and rescue region of Malta. The rescue was made closer to Italy than to Malta and while the NGO did request Italy to provide a safe port in which to disembark the rescued migrants, Italy refused to allocate a safe port which is why the NGO vessel was forced to sail further away from the point of rescue and to seek refuge within Maltese territorial waters.

Italy has closed its ports to all NGOs and also to other rescues where Italy was bound to disembark in accordance with international law.

The Government of Malta recommends that the Italian Deputy Prime Minister check his facts before drafting such public statements and refrain from making such statements in the future.

Deputy Prime Minister Di Maio is well-aware that the European Commission is currently coordinating a voluntary reallocation programme for around 300 migrants rescued in the Central Mediterranean. Therefore, rather than make such statements against Malta and European solidarity, Italy should participate in the reallocation currently being coordinated.