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Answer given by Mr Brunner
on behalf of the European Commission
(12.8.2026)

The Commission was asked by 20 Member States and Schengen associated countries in a letter signed by their Ministers in October 2025, to coordinate contacts on returns with the *de facto* authorities, to ensure a coherent European approach. Their focus is on the return of persons posing a threat to public order or national security. Returns to Afghanistan need to be addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, bearing in mind the challenges arising from the acute humanitarian and human rights situation in Afghanistan. The Commission and Sweden, on behalf of interested Member States, co-chaired a technical-level meeting with representatives of the *de facto* authorities of Afghanistan responsible for return and readmission, following technical-level discussions in Kabul, in January 2026. The technical-level meeting aimed to give Member States the opportunity to address practical aspects of the readmission process. 15 Member States participated in the meeting.

Operational engagement with the *de facto* authorities is in line with the Council conclusions of 15 September 2021¹ and 20 March 2023². It does not constitute nor imply recognition, which remains conditioned upon progress on the EU's established benchmarks, especially counterterrorism, inclusive governance and human rights, with particular concern for the rights of women and girls. The EU has strongly condemned the systemic violation of human rights. The Commission acts in full respect of the Council conclusions and of its international obligations and will continue its unwavering support to all persons concerned by those violations of human rights.

The first high-level political dialogue between the EU and Syria was held in Brussels on 11 May 2026. The dialogue was an opportunity to discuss issues of strategic interest for Syria and the EU, including on migration. The work continues with the authorities and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to ensure that the conditions are conducive to safe, dignified and sustainable returns to Syria.

The EU is stepping up its work with the Syrian authorities and relevant partners to develop a comprehensive approach to migration and displacement. This means strengthening institutional capacities to address asylum and migration, including returns, and contributing to solutions for internally displaced populations.

¹ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11713-2021-REV-2/en/pdf>.

² <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7264-2023-INIT/en/pdf>.