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Press Statement

**CCME: Welcoming Iraqi Refugees to the EU is positive step –
Appreciation of resettlement decision of EU Justice and Home Affairs Council
on 27 November 2008**

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe welcomes the decision of the Council of Ministers of the EU which resolved today "...as a signal of solidarity, the Council invites Member States to take in Iraqi refugees in a particularly vulnerable situation such as those with particular medical needs, trauma or torture victims, members of religious minorities or women on their own with family responsibilities."

"Welcoming Iraqi refugees to the EU is a positive step. We had hoped such a decision could have been taken earlier this year, but we appreciate that finally the decision is taken to resettle Iraqi refugees from Syria and Jordan and provide protection and durable solutions for particularly vulnerable refugees", Doris Peschke, General Secretary of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe commented on this decision and added: "We sincerely hope that EU Member States will now act swiftly and start with resettlement quickly."

The target of 10.000 refugees to be resettled to the EU appears small compared to the overall refugee population of more than 2 million in the neighbouring countries of Iraq. Regular resettlement programmes in all EU member states could provide for more protection capacity throughout the EU. "This decision today could also become a signal for the EU's willingness to take a bigger share in international refugee protection", Doris Peschke said.

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe and partner organisations have advocated for broader sharing of responsibility for refugee protection through resettlement to EU member states since 2003 with projects supported by the European Refugee Fund.

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The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. Members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches and Councils of Churches as well as church-related agencies across Europe. CCME formally cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.

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