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Dear Mr Borissov, dear Boyko, dear friend,

The Commission is fully committed to working with all Member States to ensure a coordinated European response to the refugee crisis, based on mutual trust, solidarity and responsibility. The Commission understands the specific concerns of Bulgaria that the effective management of the common external borders of the European Union must deserve a common response.

The adoption and full implementation of the Regulation establishing the European Border and Coast Guard, as well as the swift operationalisation of the Agency's new tasks this autumn, will put support to the Member States on a powerful footing.

But it is of course essential that in the remaining weeks before the European Border and Coast Guard is up and running, we maintain and intensify the ongoing work to support the Member States under most pressure with the use of the existing wide range of supportive activities provided in the existing Frontex Regulation. The implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016 has been successful in reducing the flows of migrants from Turkey to the European Union, but the situation remains fragile. It is essential that this period does not see the emergence of new routes.

Let me underline that I fully endorse the need for the European Union to step up the support for the consolidation of the Bulgarian border infrastructure.

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*Mr Boyko Borissov
Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria
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Following contacts between the Bulgarian Minister of Interior and Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos at the end of July, Frontex agreed to step up its work in Bulgaria in support of border surveillance, strengthening border checks and debriefing. Further to Bulgaria's request of 29 July 2016 for additional support, Frontex has indeed been reinforcing its support for border surveillance in Bulgaria, with the current deployment reaching 173 Frontex officers at the borders with Turkey and Serbia as well as the provision of technical equipment. However, more needs to be done and the additional support provided so far falls far short of what was defined as necessary by Frontex, including in the provision of additional technical support to Bulgarian authorities, with a shortfall still of 53 patrol cars foreseen to reinforce the Frontex operation in Bulgaria. The Commission is taking every opportunity to emphasise the imperative for Member States to meet the Frontex calls on Member States to provide more support equipment. That is why I intend to raise the matter once again with colleagues at the Bratislava summit later in the week.

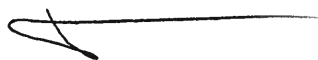
I know well that our officials are currently discussing how Bulgaria can make better use of the EU Internal Security Fund and the Asylum, Migration and EU Integration Fund to further support you in your efforts. Discussions are also ongoing on the identification of needs for additional emergency assistance and we look forward to receiving a formal application swiftly. In addition, a common contingency plan was agreed back in March this year and such contingency plan can be updated as far as necessary and activated immediately should the situation on the ground so justify. In this context, I have asked the relevant Commission officials to travel to Bulgaria in the coming days to discuss this further.

Dear Boyko,

The security of the external borders of the European Union is important for me. I am well aware and applaud the efforts of the Bulgarian authorities involved in that mission. You can count on the support of the Commission in strengthening the security in frontline Member States such as Bulgaria.

I look forward to further discussing these matters with you on 16 September in Bratislava and using the meeting as a good occasion to underline the importance of prompt collective assistance to reinforce the protection of the external border in Bulgaria.

Yours sincerely,



*all the best!
K.*