

EU MOVES TO CLOSER IMMIGRATION COOPERATION

Rome, May 31, 2002



Three weeks ahead of the Sevilla European Council, where EU's immigration policies will be examined, the EU nations broadly backed the idea of creating a European border police force.

'We don't want Europe to be a fortress; rather, we want to devise an integrated model of border control that will guarantee the security of our citizens', said Italy's Interior Minister, Claudio SCAJOLA, as he presented Ministers from 28 countries with the conclusions of the first feasibility report on setting up a European

corps of border guards.

The report received the backing of the Interior Ministers of the EU member States and the thirteen candidate countries attending the Conference in Rome.

European Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner Antonio VITTORINO said it was imperative for EU governments to remove conflicting national laws and regulations that block a single immigration policy.

"I hope the current situation in Europe will give fresh impetus to speeding up the harmonization of immigration laws", said Vittorino.

EU's immigration policy will be at the top of the Sevilla European Council on June 21, 2002 after the September 11 terrorists attacks, the growing activity of mafia organisations trafficking human beings and electoral gains by anti-immigration populist parties in some European countries.

[Pictured above left: Italian Interior Minister Claudio Scajola talks to his Spanish counterpart Mariano Rajoy during the conference on the creation of a EU force to police the bloc's frontiers in Rome]