ENAR statement:
ENAR condemns hate speech against Commissioner Malmström and NGOs in Malta

Brussels, 12 August 2013 – We strongly condemn the hate speech against the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström, NGOs in Malta, and asylum seekers that occurred after the NGOs and the Commissioner on 5 and 6 August called for the immediate and safe disembarkation of 102 migrants aboard the tanker MT Salamis. Many individuals published racist and abusive comments on social media, several of them targeting the Commissioner personally. ENAR underscores that online hate speech is a violation of human rights. We urge governments to reinforce legislation to monitor hate on the internet, and to adopt a zero tolerance policy to stigmatising comments likely to incite violence, racism, or other forms of discrimination.

On 5 August, several NGOs in Malta urged the Maltese and Italian authorities to give priority to the preservation of lives when reaching a decision about disembarkation. In a press release on 6 August, Commissioner Malmström said that the government in Malta had a humanitarian duty to save the migrants. Among the migrants were four pregnant women, an injured woman, and a baby. ENAR fully supports such calls on governments to first and foremost ensure the protection of lives.

The tanker MT Salamis rescued the migrants on August 4, and proceeded towards Malta, which refused to allow it to dock. On 7 August, Italy agreed to admit the migrants.

For further information, contact:
Anders Larson, Communication and Press Officer
Tel: +32 (0)2 229 35 70 - E-mail: anders@enar.eu.org - Website: www.enar-eu.org

Notes to the editor:
1. The European Network Against Racism (ENAR aisbl) stands up against racism and discrimination and advocates for equality and solidarity for all in Europe. We connect local and national anti-racist NGOs throughout Europe and act as an interface between our member organisations and the European institutions. We voice the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities in European and national policy debates.