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[redacted]@ec.europa.euBrussels, 14. 07. 2020
Ares (2020) 3903723Dear Honourable Member, *Dear Cornelia,*

Thank you for your e-mail of 22 June and for sharing your concerns about the incident at the Greek-Turkish sea border. As I have repeatedly underlined, we need a holistic approach to prevent incidents that might put human lives at risk and that our actions should defend our fundamental rights and values and provide assistance to those in need.

Under EU law, Member States have the right, as well as the obligation, to protect the Union's external borders by preventing unauthorised entries. The Commission has repeatedly stressed that any measures taken to protect our external borders must be proportionate and compliant with fundamental rights. Let me recall that it is national law that prescribes the conditions for the use of coercive measures and that any inappropriate use of force should be subject to independent investigation by the national competent authorities.

As you know, the Commission follows the situation in Greece closely. As a result, as soon as we became aware of the incident at the sea border on 22 June 2020, my services contacted the Greek authorities on the matter and enquired about its follow-up.

The Greek authorities informed us that four incidents with attempted illegal crossing of Greek sea borders took place on that day in the broader area of the Greek island of Lesbos. In all four cases, people in distress were rescued and received by the Turkish Coast Guard. Moreover, the Greek authorities underlined that they operate in full respect for international and European law and of the rules of involvement at sea and denounced the frequent lack of responsiveness by the Turkish Coast Guard to the Hellenic Coast Guard's calls, despite the former's obligations. I have instructed my service to continue following the situation at the land and sea border closely and to remain in contact with the Greek authorities on this as well as on other matters.

Cornelia Ernst Member of the European Parliament

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The Commission will continue supporting the most affected Member States to manage migration according to EU law, fundamental rights and our international obligations. I count on your valuable support to achieve this and look forward to continue working closely with you and with the European Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

