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Dear Minister, Dear Cătălin,

In March this year, we set up our joint pilot project for fast asylum and return procedures, as a direct follow-up to the EU Action Plan on the Western Balkans from December 2022, President von der Leyen's letter of 26 January 2023 to European Council Leaders, and the European Council conclusions of 9 February 2023.

I would like to thank you for the constructive dialogue, pro-active engagement and concrete progress made since the start of the pilot by the Romanian authorities. The Steering Committee of 22 September showcased the very encouraging results achieved by the pilot so far, which I am sure will result in good practices to be replicated in other Member States.

I would like to highlight in particular the amendment of Romania's asylum legislation in May, an important step towards more efficient asylum and return procedures; the intensified cooperation with EU Agencies (EUAA, Europol and Frontex), including Romania's active participation in joint investigations of organised crime; and the successful management of Romania's external border with Serbia, grounded in the good cooperation with the Serbian authorities. A detailed progress report on the pilot project is attached to this letter.

With a view to further capitalise on the positive achievements so far and ensure an efficient implementation of measures put in place under the pilot project, I am happy that we will have the opportunity to continue working closely in this framework, with the necessary support by the Commission and EU Agencies.

Yours sincerely,

Ylva JOHANSSON

Mr. Marian-Cătălin PREDOIU
Minister of Internal Affairs
Republic of Romania