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‘ Refugees should be at the heart of asylum policies as this is the only real way to ensure the full respect of their human dignity.’

This is the core message emerging from a non-governmental workshop organised by aditus and the Jesuit Refugee Service (Malta) on the occasion of *World Refugee Day 2011*, and of the 60th anniversary of the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. The event was organised with a view to discussing NGO concerns and recommendations for the treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees in Malta.

aditus Chairperson Dr. Neil Falzon stated “*we urge the Maltese authorities to undertake a comprehensive consultation process with a view to bringing Malta’s asylum policies and practices in line with international and European human rights standards.”*

The discussions focused on three main themes identified as the most important areas requiring short-, mid- and long-term action by the Maltese authorities and the European Union institutions and Member States: **detention**, **reception standards particularly for vulnerable persons** and **integration**.

“Whilst the participating organisations acknowledged the challenges faced by the Maltese authorities in receiving asylum-seekers, a clear concern expressed is that policy decisions are too often based on considerations other than the protection needs and lawful rights of asylum-seekers and refugees”, commented JRS Director Fr. Joseph Cassar.

The discussions were preceded by expert presentations from Madeline Garlick, Senior EU Affairs Officer at UNHCR’s office in Brussels, and Kris Pollett, Senior Policy Officer at the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).

In the coming days, the participating NGOs will disseminate the Conclusions from their discussions, with a view to highlighting their major concerns and suggesting concrete recommendations for the way ahead.