



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Apostolic Nuncio
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations
and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the 38th Session of the Human Rights Council
Item 3 – ID with the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants
Geneva, 20 June 2018

Thank you, Mr. President.

If migration can be seen as a “sign of the times”, the “tragedy of our time” is that we risk becoming too familiar and insensitive to the tragic deaths and abuses of our brothers and sisters who are compelled to move for a plethora of reasons but also to the underlying factors and growing inequalities that cause such migratory movements.

The path of dialogue on which we embarked through the New York Declaration and the ongoing negotiations and consultations on the two Global Compacts can contribute to foster a culture of solidarity. In this regard, it is important to sustain momentum and to reject the logic of indifference and carelessness. While the primary responsibility rests with States according to their capacities, especially in terms of integration, we are reminded constantly that what is at stake are human lives.

Last week, Pope Francis urged to “tear down the wall of ‘comfortable and silent complicity’ that worsens their helplessness”¹, recalling that the migratory phenomenon is “not simply one of *numbers*, but of *persons*, each with his or her own history, culture, feelings and aspirations... These persons, our brothers and sisters, need ‘ongoing protection’, independently of whatever migrant status they may have”².

Mr. President,

The Holy See Delegation shares some of the concerns outlined by the Special Rapporteur in his Report, in particular regarding children on the move and detention, which can never be in their best interest. Offering asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and victims of trafficking in persons an opportunity to find peace requires a strategy combining four actions: welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating.³

Return, readmission and reintegration are integral elements of a well-ordered migration system, but too often the way it is handled is detrimental to both migrants and to relations among States and may actually strengthen the underlying drivers of irregular migration. In particular, making development aid contingent on a country’s cooperation in the return of migrants creates mutual blackmail and standoffs⁴, which often result in abuses of human rights. The fact that human persons are used increasingly as bargaining chips at the negotiating table is unacceptable.

¹ Pope Francis, *Message to the “Second Holy See – Mexico Conference on International Migration”*, 14 June 2018.

² *Ibid.*

³ Cf. Pope Francis, *Message for the LI World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2018.

⁴ Cf. A/71/728 Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration (the “Sutherland’s Report”).

Mr. President,

Migration has offered historically an immense contribution to the development of people. Yet, it is important that the decision to move be a free and informed choice, not a compelling necessity. If on the one hand, every person has the right to emigrate, at the same time there exists a right to remain in their home countries.⁵ The Delegation of the Holy See has insisted repeatedly on the urgent need to address the factors that force people to leave their homes and countries which contribute to disorderly, unpredictable and dangerous migratory flows.

The interplaying factors that shape migration, many of which we cannot yet anticipate fully, cannot be addressed by a single State alone. In this regard, this Delegation shares the concerns of the UN Secretary General, H.E. Mr. António Guterres, that we “should use all the developmental, governance and political tools at our disposal to prevent and mitigate the human and natural forces that drive such large movements of people, but we should also recognize that we have a duty to care for those who migrate out of desperation.”⁶

Thank you, Mr. President.

⁵ Intervention by the Holy See’s Secretary of State at the “*Second Holy See – Mexico Conference on International Migration*”, 14 June 2018.

⁶ Cf. A/72/643 Report of the United Nations Secretary General “*Making Migration Work for All*”.