



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the 100th Session of the Council of the International Organization for Migration
Geneva, 6 December 2011

Mr. President,

At this 100th session of the IOM Council, migration remains as urgent a global concern - if not more so - as when IOM started its services 60 years ago. The current economic crisis, in fact, has more complicated the lives of migrants rather than significantly reduced their number. Reliable projections indicate a probable growth in the international movement of people from the present 214 plus millions making migration a megatrend of the 21st century. This truly international and very complex phenomenon, however, is not statistical play, but directly involves and affects millions of human beings, their families, and the people of the countries of origin, transit and destination. It is above all the human dimension that should place migration at the forefront of the responsibility of States, public institutions and civil society. The experience of migration changes entire societies as well as individual lives and yet there is limited reflection on its long-term consequences, and limited coordinated planning. Unfortunately, attitudes of self-protection prevail, aggravated by the economic crisis and the rise in pressure on the borders of developed countries. Migration becomes a test for the respect and implementation of human rights especially when policies are centered on control and national security, forgetting the equally important security of the persons on the move across the planet. The search for an efficient and comprehensive answer assumes greater urgency as new motives for emigration are given by natural and human made catastrophes, climate change and violence, whether among states or by non-State groups.

Mr. President, my Delegation would like to congratulate IOM for its 60 years of service and at the same time to call for further reflection and research on some topics that can shape a positive answer to the future of population movements.

The international answer provided to date remains fragmentary and lacks coordination. IOM has been at the forefront of the answer to the needs of people on the move while maintaining a specific vision and a pragmatic organization. For example, in a number of emergencies it has effectively embraced partnership with the UNHCR, indicating both the usefulness and move towards a wider collaboration. But a dozen or so international agencies have a stake in migration, often with a particular interest in certain aspects for which they could assume respective responsibilities. With regard to migration management, sixty years on the issue of governance appears as an inevitable next step to consider. Attempts to address this issue meet with reluctance and misgivings since public

opinion often is reported to be hostile and anti-immigration parties are gaining ground in the rich countries. But increased cooperation within the multilateral system and a specific contribution by IOM to the debate on coherence of migration policies can make a significant and strategic contribution to attaining more assistance and protection for all migrants. In fact, globalization intensifies the interdependence of countries in need of manpower with those that have younger populations; a sensible and rights-oriented approach to these dynamics can create a synergy that is beneficial for both. The achievement of such synergy should also be the goal of multilateral institutions so that the action of one will not contradict or create confusion for activities undertaken by another. The development of an appropriate global architecture for the management of migration is certainly a huge challenge, but, if based on common values, mutual acknowledgement of and work for the complementarity of policies and decisions, and the will to resolve common difficulties, it may result in the positive beginning of a real partnership and a clear line of leadership.

A second observation deals with the need to promote and strengthen a positive perception of migrants. There is clear and accumulating evidence about the positive economic contribution made by migrants to their new countries through the taxes they pay, the new businesses they start and the variety of services they provide that range from jobs that are considered socially less attractive, although necessary, to the care of family members who are disabled, elderly or very young. Migrants make visible the link that binds the whole human family together, the richness of cultures and the resource for development exchanges and trade networks constituted by diaspora communities. For their part, the positive contribution of the presence of migrants becomes effective when they too open themselves to receive and appreciate the basic values of the new society so that a common and richer future may be built together. The role played by the media and by education is crucial in this regard. Migrants should not be used as a distraction for lack of jobs and unresolved economic crises nor be seen as threats to security. The effort to overcome an overly biased and emotional approach will result in a more balanced and factual presentation and will better serve the formation of public opinion. Overly technical rules on border management, on visas and infrastructures, on strictly economic services, necessary as they are, do not reflect the importance of migration as a social and political phenomenon with a transformative capacity for entire societies. Multicultural societies create a new reality that confronts elected officials and legislators with new questions.

Modern communications raise expectations and aspirations of potential migrants by projecting images—often exaggerated—of other types of societies and life-styles. Clearly however, the push factors to emigrate are no longer merely economic in nature, but also include the search for security and freedom, the possibility of personal and professional development and of a better quality of life. All these elements play a part in the decision to leave. In this process, a major consideration is given to the families left behind, not just in terms of sending them money, but, more importantly, of finding a way to be reunited. In the development of immigration policies, therefore, these central

sensibilities should be taken into account. Financial aid and technology transfer do not seem to offer the promise of development sufficiently capable to convince potential migrants that they have a choice to remain at home. Cooperation on the part of the international community will need to sustain a social environment where fundamental human rights and freedoms are guaranteed.

Mr. President, the achievement of an adequate global management of migration flows, a positive understanding of them, and the approach to *human* development may seem long range goals. But the speed of the journey is less important than proceeding in the right direction. In the meantime, there are also some immediate situations that demand a response. Among these, for example, are included the growing migration of unaccompanied children; the endemic violence and trauma suffered by migrants in transit, especially women and children; attention owed to migrants being deported back to their countries and then left in particularly destitute conditions; and the sole reliance on control and deportation methods in dealing with irregular migrants, which, instead of halting irregular migration, reconfigures mobility flows via more dangerous migration routes and encourages trafficking in human persons. The solution to these and related problems begins with the awareness, as Pope Benedict XVI writes in his Message for the 97th World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2011), of the “profound link between all human beings... who form one family of brothers and sisters in societies that are becoming ever more multiethnic and intercultural, where also people of various religions are urged to take part in dialogue, so that a serene and fruitful coexistence with respect for legitimate differences may be found?” As IOM celebrates its 60th anniversary, the complexity of the challenges posed by population movements multiply. This milestone in the Organization’s history offers the occasion for a renewed vision and commitment at the service of all persons uprooted and searching for a better and productive life.