



Presentation by His Excellency Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the at 65th Session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR: General Debate
Geneva, 1 October 2014

Mr. President,

Today, we have reached the highest number of forcibly displaced persons since World War II. It is not merely an increase in quantity but there is also a concomitant increase of complexity due to non-state actors in current conflicts and unpredictable massive displacement as a consequence.

The common goal of protection is an ever-growing challenge. This is due in large part to the unprecedented number of persons on the move; the lack of financial resources as a result of donor fatigue; ever-more restrictive measures limiting access for asylum seekers; the reality of tensions which tend to arise between local populations and newly arrived; and additionally, the phenomenon of unaccompanied minors, that is increasingly visible in the Americas, and also in Europe.

The practical preparedness of States to accommodate this increasing number of asylum seekers and refugees appears to be decreasing. But the generosity shown so far by the International Community is a sign of hope, and it should continue by expressing solidarity to the victims of armed conflicts and situations of constant violation of fundamental human rights.

Such a state of affairs should help all of us who form the International Community to reflect upon and urgently to devise preventive measures so that people are not forced to leave their homes in order to survive. This phenomenon creates a tremendous burden upon the host States, who must invest an exceptional amount of their resources, and thus places an obligation of solidarity by the wider community.

The necessary change of policy from focusing on assistance to prevention implies an important cultural shift, in which the human person, with his inviolable dignity and inalienable human rights, is the center of attention, rather than being a mere instrument for economic and political decisions. Such a perspective requires of the International Community a reformulation of methods and structures of prevention, humanitarian assistance, and long-term development.

The Delegation of the Holy See encourages the continued extraordinary generosity of many donor countries and of those hosting societies that have welcomed, often at a great sacrifice, millions of forcibly displaced people. We also support the development of an

increased global partnership, based more upon human solidarity and less upon selfish interests, to answer the plight of the current massive number of asylum seekers and refugees. Indeed, this solidarity is not simply an abstract idea, but a concrete moral imperative derived from the fact that together we form one human family. This is the first step to realizing reconciliation and restarting a productive life.

As Pope Francis emphasizes: “It is necessary to respond to the globalization of migration with the globalization of charity and cooperation, in such a way as to make the conditions of migrants more humane. Solidarity with migrants and refugees must be accompanied by the courage and creativity necessary to develop, on a world-wide level, a more just and equitable financial and economic order, as well as an increasing commitment to peace, the indispensable condition for all authentic progress.”¹

Mr. President,

In conclusion, the continued, long-term stay of populations in camps and the increasing number of persons in overcrowded urban areas are in themselves a clear manifestation that violence can only destroy and fragment society. The present situation in the world is an appeal to the International Community that the only positive way forward is to pursue the path of dialogue toward “peaceful coexistence”.

¹ Pope Francis, “Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees.” 23 September 2014.