



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 105th Session of the Council of the International Organization for Migration
Geneva, 25 - 28 November 2014

Mr. Chairperson,

My Delegation extends congratulations to you, Ambassador Eddico and to the Council Bureau, on your election and thanks Ambassador Enrique Chavez Basagoitia of Peru, for his work as Chair of the Council over the course of the last year. It also welcomes the Independent State of Samoa as a new IOM Member.

At present 1 in every 7 persons worldwide lives in some sort of migration status. The world witnesses, as migrants, an unprecedented and appalling number of unaccompanied children; complex health and humanitarian emergencies, and over 50 million forcibly displaced persons, the highest number since World War II. There is little doubt that migration is one of the most powerful forces shaping the economic, social, political, and cultural life in today's world. While often accompanied by challenges, this phenomenon results in benefits for countries of origin, destination, and for the migrants themselves. In fact, it is a well-established fact that migrants can make an even richer contribution when their dignity is respected, integration in their country of residence is favored, their human rights, secured, and the development of their talents and energy encouraged.

The time has come for States and the international community to respond to the globalization of migration with the globalization of solidarity and cooperation, in such a way as to make the conditions of migrants more humane.¹ From a path of confrontation, we need to move to one of dialogue and encounter. From migration control and the use of the rising number of migrants dying in transit toward a dreamed destination as deterrence², we must strive to regulate openness and devise legal ways to facilitate mobility.

¹ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20140903_world-migrants-day-2015.html (Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 2015 World Day of Migrants and Refugees)

² <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15239&LangID=E>

Mr. Chairperson,

Among the various aspects of migration, I wish to focus briefly on two concerns: on migrant workers and on those persons displaced by climate change and natural disasters.

The persistent inequalities and the increasing levels of poverty prompt many workers in developing countries to seek work abroad.³ This type of migration, however, “is still too frequently associated with unacceptable labor abuses and exploitation in the face of which inaction is an abdication of responsibility.”⁴In particular, migrant domestic workers, the majority of whom are women, find themselves especially vulnerable and are often victims of human trafficking. The recruitment process for migrants, therefore, needs to be further formalized and facilitated in order to prevent exploitation. Legislation must be enforced to ensure that migrant workers’ rights are respected. Within such a framework, a closer cooperation between the private sector and governments is needed to enhance global knowledge about national and international recruitment practices, to promote fair business standards as well as to strengthen laws, policies, and enforcement mechanisms.

The international instruments on labor and migration⁵ adopted over the years, are crucial for safeguarding the dignity and rights of migrant workers; however, existing regulations in many countries are often inconsistent with, or fail to uphold, them.

Mr. Chairperson,

My Delegation would also like to underscore the role that climate change and other environmental factors are increasingly playing in the movement of persons. Perhaps more than ever, concerns of accelerating climate change call for a renewed consideration of its effects upon migration. At the moment, there is little consensus on a definition of migrants forced to move by environmental degradation or climate change, but there must be a term that corresponds to this reality which could provide sufficient rationale to create the necessary framework to protect them.⁶ The number of environmental-degradation and climate change-induced migrants has reached an annual average of 27 million people.⁷ The humanitarian and human rights impact on people should be the priority. Neither the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (“UNFCCC”) nor its Kyoto Protocol of 1997 include any provisions concerning specific assistance or protection

³ <http://ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/migrant-workers/lang-en/index.htm>

⁴ ILO’s Director General remarks during the 103rd International Labour Conference, May 28, 2014

http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/103/reports/reports-to-the-conference/WCMS_242879/lang-en/index.htm

⁵ e.g. the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the International Convention on the Protection of all Migrant Workers and their families, and several ILO Conventions.

⁶ Rabab Fatima, Anita Jawadurovna Wadud and Sabira Coelho, *Human rights, climate change, environmental degradation and migration: a new paradigm*, March 2014

⁷ <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-figures#natural>

for those directly affected by the effects of climate change. Likewise, the most recent G-20 communiqué⁸ does not make any single reference to the humanitarian consequences of climate change on the populations affected. In this context, the Delegation of the Holy See finds it most opportune that the IOM decided to convene a Conference on the topic of “Migrants and Cities” in October 2015. In fact, while most policies are formulated at the state level, the large majority of internal and international migrants actually move to large metropolitan areas in many cases residing in precarious informal settlements and slums, a degraded and problematic environment.

The upcoming World Conference on Disaster-Risk Reduction in Sendai, the 8th Global Forum on Migration and Development in 2015, and the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, offer opportunities to highlight the essential humanitarian aspects of migration. The Delegation of the Holy See hopes that the good sense of the international community will prevail. Dignity has no nationality: it is equal for every person. No country can singlehandedly face the difficulties associated with this phenomenon.⁹ Respect for the human rights of migrants it is not just a responsibility we all share; it is an ethical duty.

Mr. Chairperson,

No man or woman, having the possibility to live in his/her homeland with dignity, would feel compelled to flee his/her country. We must then, strive to create the proper environment “at home”. In light of current demographic trends and projections that anticipate continued migration flows, it is necessary to tackle the root causes of migration: extreme poverty, unstable political situations, health crises, persecutions, climate change. The goal ahead is to make migration a choice and not a compulsive necessity. In the meantime, the “presence of migrants is a reminder of the need to eradicate inequality, injustice and abuses.”¹⁰

In conclusion, it makes sense to integrate migration, the “oldest action against poverty”, into the Post-2015 Development Agenda. States and International Organizations, together with civil society, have the responsibility to devise and implement migration policies, strategies and agreements to make more humane the experience of migration in its old and new forms and thus ensure its benefits for all.

⁸ https://www.g20.org/sites/default/files/g20_resources/library/brisbane_g20_leaders_summit_communique.pdf

⁹Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 2014 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20130805_world-migrants-day.html

¹⁰ Pope Francis, Message to Participants on 7th World Congress for the Pastoral Care of Migrants. 21 Nov. 2014.