



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer
of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the
70th Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Geneva, 9 October 2019

Mr. President.

Forced migration increasingly has become one of the greatest challenges of our times, most often with tragic impact on hundreds of thousands human lives. Pope Francis frequently expresses his deep concern that “violent conflicts and all-out wars continue to tear humanity apart” and that “injustices and discrimination follow one upon the other.”¹ While conflicts are concentrated, for the most part, in certain regions of the world, the weapons that fuel them are produced and sold in other regions, often well isolated from the violent activities to which they contribute. And yet, the citizens of the same countries that profit most from the sale of such weapons, usually are unwilling to accept the refugees produced by the very same conflicts from which they profit. This vicious cycle, combined with a growing tendency toward extreme individualism, “produces a globalization of indifference where migrants, refugees, displaced persons and victims of trafficking have become emblems of exclusions.”²

Mr. President,

We find ourselves required, yet again, to address many of the “historical” problems faced by refugees as well as by those States that have been hosting large numbers of them. During the past two days we have heard many calls for those States that are directly affected by the largest influxes not to be left alone. In a sense, these appeals renew the spirit and the political will that emerged from the New York Declaration and the ensuing adoption of the Global Compacts, especially the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR) and represent a concrete, glimmering sign of hope. Such commitments now need to be transformed into tangible actions.

As His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of His Holiness Pope Francis, recently affirmed in his address to the United Nations General Assembly “galvanizing effective multilateralism is one of the most important priorities for the international community, since it is a precondition for addressing so many of our day’s greatest challenges.”³ Refugees, who so often experience exclusion and suffering, deserve such solidarity in the form of assistance and urgent attention by the international community. In this regard, the Holy See wishes to commend the UNHCR for the substantial efforts that it is undertaking in the preparation for the upcoming Global Refugee Forum.

¹ Pope Francis, Message for 105th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 29 September 2019.

² *Ibid.*

³ Card. Pietro Parolin, Statement to the 74th United Nations General Assembly, New York, 28 September 2019.

Mr. President,

Promoting dialogue at every level is indeed both the prevention and the antidote to divisions and crises. Allow me to highlight three particular aspects that also were raised by the Holy See throughout the consultative process for the GCR:

1) The shared responsibility to address the root causes of forced displacement and the efforts to support reconciliation and confidence-building measures for a voluntary and safe return of refugees. It is important that refugees who have found shelter and protection in neighboring countries are able to return home and to remain there in safety. This aspect is particularly important if we consider the situation in certain regions of the world and the impact of forced displacement on the delicate balance among religious and other minorities.

2) The need to put in place concrete measures to expand the number and range of alternative legal pathways for safe and voluntary resettlement, including private and community sponsorship programs; the opening of humanitarian corridors and granting of special temporary visas for refugees in particularly vulnerable situations; promoting greater respect for the unity of the family by expanding family reunification visas; and the need to respect the universal right to a duly certified nationality for all children at birth.

In this regard, the Holy See Delegation welcomes the establishment of a specific High-level Segment dedicated to statelessness, an issue that also was reflected in the Global Compact. We wish to commend Kyrgyzstan for its efforts to eradicate statelessness as well as other States engaged in similar efforts and express the hope that such proactive examples will serve as an encouragement for others to take similar actions.

3) Health, including mental health, constitutes a fundamental pillar for integral human development. On 27 November of this year, the Permanent Mission of the Holy See will organize an event in Geneva on "Health of Migrants and Refugees: a Matter of Life and Dignity". Health is never to be considered a consumer good or to be instrumentalized politically or ideologically. On the contrary, health must be recognized as a universal right. Thus, access to healthcare cannot be considered a privilege; it must be accessible and affordable to all, but most especially to the most vulnerable persons, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, pregnant women and children

Mr. President,

Refugees are not numbers and quotas to be distributed and allocated, but persons with a name, a story, with wounds, but also with much strength and potential as well as hope and aspirations. On 29 September 2019, following a Mass to mark the Catholic Church's 105th Observance of the International Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis inaugurated, in Saint Peter's Square, a sculpture depicting a group of migrants and refugees of diverse faiths and cultures and from different historic times. The inspiration behind the work was taken from a biblical passage, St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares".

As a family of nations, we share a common destiny and a common home. Through effective multilateralism, we must counteract the increasing and bleak contempt and discrimination toward refugees, migrants, asylum seekers and other marginalized persons who find themselves in the struggle to survive today's "throwaway culture". This can only be done through more harmonized and equitable cooperation and assistance among States. When host States receiving large influxes of refugees are left alone, it is inevitable that refugees themselves will not be welcomed with dignity. If we truly care about refugees, we must not ignore or abandon the host communities. At the same time, we must solve the underlying root causes of forced displacement. Only in this way can the realism required of international politics shield itself against surrender to cynicism and to the globalization of indifference.

Thank you.