



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
111th Session of the Council of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Geneva, 26 November 2020

Mr. Chair,

At the outset, the Delegation of the Holy See extends its congratulations to you on your election and warmly welcomes both the Russian Federation as a Member State as well as Malaysia as an Observer State to the IOM family.

Please also allow me to thank the Director General for presenting his annual report on the state of affairs and the Deputy Director General for her efforts in developing the Internal Governance Framework. It is particularly appreciated that IOM also took steps to address the nexus between migration, the environment and climate change.

Indeed, 2019 has been an extraordinary year for the IOM. The growth in IOM's budget, staff and projects demonstrates once again the fact that migration is a natural phenomenon and a human reality from time immemorial. Such an "expansion" is another indicator of the increased importance of a more determined approach to improve the governance of migration. In this regard, the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration truly can provide States with a valuable opportunity "to improve their respective migration policies and, together, the international management of migration."¹

Mr. Chair,

It is regrettable that, while migrants' labor is in high demand and welcomed to compensate for labor shortages, they also are often rejected and subjected to resentful, utilitarian attitudes by many in receiving societies. This sad reality is a glaring contradiction that stems from placing economic interests over the interests of the human person. This tendency became particularly evident during the Covid-19 "lockdowns", where many of the "essential" workers most affected were migrants.

In his most recent Encyclical Letter entitled "Fratelli Tutti", which was released on the 3rd of October this year, Pope Francis decries that "migrants are not seen as entitled like others to participate in the life of society, and it is forgotten that they possess the same intrinsic dignity as any person"². The Pope, instead, suggests that migrants can be a gift and invites us to change the way we perceive migration, acknowledging that "migrants bring an opportunity for enrichment and the integral human development of all."³

Mr. Chair,

The Holy See Delegation wishes to address with this Council the following: unaccompanied children on the move, access to health, and internal displacement.

1) Children on the move. In recent months there has been a rise in the number of children on the move, many of whom are unaccompanied or who end up being separated from their families. This is of particular concern for the Holy See and should sound as an alarm bell for the whole

¹ Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of His Holiness Pope Francis and Head of the Delegation of the Holy See during the General Debate of the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration Marrakech, Morocco, 10 December 2018

² Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter "Fratelli Tutti", par. 39.

³ *Ibid.*, par. 133.

international community. Child migrants, especially those unaccompanied by parents or guardians, often “are invisible and voiceless [...]”⁴. They risk falling victim to perverse scourges such as child trafficking, exploitation, and abuse. No matter where they are or where they come from, all children have individual needs and rights even when they cross borders. In this regard, the Holy See urges that all related policies prioritize their best interests at all times and at all stages.

2) Access to healthcare, including mental health, constitutes a fundamental pillar for integral human development. It is regrettable that, amidst the pandemic, many migrants have become even more vulnerable than they were previously – a situation that has been complicated by unequal access to adequate medical care. Even more concerning, those who find themselves in irregular situations, out of fear of being detained or deported, often hesitate to seek medical care.

Health is a public good and should never be instrumentalized politically or ideologically. On the contrary, rather than a privilege, healthcare must be accessible and affordable to all, but most especially to the most vulnerable persons, including people on the move. Access to healthcare should be regulated through non-discriminatory, comprehensive laws, policies and practices firmly rooted in the inherent dignity of human life at every stage, that is, from its beginning, through its development and at its natural end.

3) Internal displacement. This year Pope Francis devoted his Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees to “the drama of internally displaced persons, an often-unseen tragedy that the global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated”.⁵

While respecting national sovereignty, there is an urgent need for genuine cooperation within the international community on internal displacement. In this regard, the Holy See wishes to encourage States to design a clearer system of responsibility for the internally displaced, one that will ensure effective protection, achieve durable solutions and, ultimately, save lives.

The Holy See hopes that the work of the United Nations Secretary General’s High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement will garner attention and worldwide support for displaced persons. It is essential to devise concrete mechanisms of coordination founded on the principles that all people, regardless of their migratory status, should be able to remain in their home in peace and security without the threat of being forcibly displaced internally or across borders. In this regard, partnerships with religious organizations and faith communities are essential.

Mr. Chair,

As Pope Francis has said, the world will emerge either better or worse after the pandemic. What is certain is that migration will be playing an ever-increasing role in our societies. Therefore, now is the time to rethink the parameters of human coexistence through the lenses of human fraternity and solidarity. In this regard, the successful integration of migrants is essential if they are to make their meaningful contributions to our societies, cultures and to economy. At the same time, integration is a two-way process and presupposes that those who arrive are also open to integration, respecting the culture and values of their new home, neighbors and country.

In conclusion, the Holy See wishes to emphasize Pope Francis’ assertion that the debate about migration is not only about migrants. Rather, it is about all of us, as well as the present and future of our societies.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

⁴ Pope Francis, Message for the 103rd World Day of Migrants and Refugees.

⁵ Pope Francis, Message for the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees.