



**Statement by His Eminence Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J.,
Undersecretary of the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting
Integral Human Development,
Head of Delegation of the Holy See to the High-Level Officials Meeting
Geneva, 15 December 2021**

Mr. Chairperson,
High Commissioner,
Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

The Holy See wishes to commend the UNHCR and Switzerland for co-hosting this important High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM). Although we are connected remotely, I assure you of my personal closeness and, above all, of that of His Holiness Pope Francis.

The Holy See would like to begin by reiterating its support for the vision and ambition of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). Two years after the first Global Refugee Forum, it is legitimate to ask two simple questions: First, has it improved access to protection for refugees, durable solutions, or equitable burden and responsibility sharing, particularly for host States? Second, how has the pandemic affected the achievement of the objectives of the Global Compact?

Mr. Chairperson,

Regarding the second question, it is undeniable that the pandemic has become a crisis of protection and delayed the achievement of durable solutions. At the same time, it has also helped to call attention to parts of the international protection system that are in need of reinforcement and reform. Thankfully, the GCR continues to provide possible solutions as well as a forum for their consideration and discussion.

However, even with opportunities before us, the danger remains that we become indifferent to the suffering of refugees and countless “others” as a “normal” daily occurrence. Overwhelmed by the ever-increasing numbers of those forcibly displaced, it is easy to forget that they are human persons and families in search of safety and peace. Therefore, the new and persistent conflicts and injustices behind the mass exoduses should prompt us toward deeper reflection of their root causes.

As Pope Francis recently affirmed during his visit to the Reception and Identification Centre in Mytilene, Greece, *“It is an issue for the whole world: a humanitarian crisis that concerns everyone. The pandemic has had a global impact; it has made us realize that we are all on the same boat; it has made us experience what it means to have identical fears. We have come to understand that the great issues must be faced together, since in today’s world piecemeal solutions are inadequate.”*¹

¹ Address of Pope Francis, Apostolic Journey to Cyprus and Greece, Visit to the refugees, “Reception and Identification Centre”, Mytilene, 5 December 2021.

This means that we cannot look the other way, deny our common humanity or disregard those who are suffering. Instead, we must shake ourselves from the individualism that excludes others and awaken hearts that are deaf to the needs of our neighbours.² Building walls will not bring us any closer to real, sustainable solutions. They only exacerbate human suffering and conflict. Eventually, the strategy of externalization will fail and the crisis we face will be even more difficult to manage.

Mr. Chairperson,

On the occasion of this *High Level Meeting*, the Holy See wishes to echo Pope Francis' clarion call to "*stop this shipwreck of civilization*" and, at the same time, to acknowledge the generosity and solidarity shown by Countries that continue to welcome and host displaced persons. This is an essential witness to the way forward: human fraternity and solidarity. It would also be impossible without the close collaboration of civil society, including faith-based organizations, religious communities, and local churches, which have an enduring, stable presence in the field and are often the first to provide protection during emergencies and sustainable solutions in their aftermath.

We are also grateful to those Countries that have made concrete pledges, in particular, in increasing resettlement quotas and in ensuring education for young refugees. Prevention, protection and durable solutions are inevitably interlinked. If one fails, the others cannot deliver. We hope that this HLOM will contribute to sustain each of these three aspects, translating "*burden and responsibility sharing*" into concrete *shared solutions*.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

² Cfr. *Ibidem*.