



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, Permanent Representative  
of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva  
at the 103<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Council of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
Geneva, 26-29 November 2013

Chairperson,

1. The Contributions of Migrants to Development. This Council convenes at a propitious moment in the evolution of migration governance, policy formulation and practice. As the international community develops its strategies for the post-2015 Development Agenda, the priority-setting that is required to address the needs and rights of the 232 million migrants worldwide, who constitute 3.2 percent of the global population, cannot be ignored.<sup>1</sup> By comparing the number of international migrants with those reported in past years, 175 million in 2000 and 154 million in 1990, we can better understand the growing significance and impact of this reality. While people on the move are motivated by different needs and aspirations, we must recognize the unique human dignity of such persons and acknowledge the gifts, talents, skills, experience and cultural patrimony offered by all migrants who serve as bridges between their respective countries of origin and the countries that receive them. We must also recognize the difficult conditions that lead or compel persons to seek a better, more secure life in a foreign land. Many flee intense privation, violence or natural disaster. Most decide to migrate as part of family survival strategy. They make extraordinary sacrifices to further their own and their family members' prospects and potential. As Pope Francis has put it, migrants and refugees "share a legitimate desire for knowing and having, but above all for *being* more. (italics added)"<sup>2</sup>

Migrants also substantially contribute to the well-being and development of their countries of origin and adoption. Wage increases from migration exceed all of the world's formal development and anti-poverty interventions in developing nations combined. Globally, the world's international migrants are expected to remit earnings worth \$550 billion this year, including \$414 billion to developing countries. Diaspora savings, which can be mobilized to help finance development goals, are estimated to exceed \$400 billion. Thus migration provides a fast path to poverty reduction in countries of origin. Countries

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<sup>1</sup> <http://esa.un.org/unmigration/wallchart2013.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Vatican City, 24 September 2013, <http://www.news.va/en/news/popes-message-for-world-day-of-migrants-and-refugee>

of destination, in turn, benefit from necessary workers, tax revenue and other contributions from immigrants.

In these circumstances, it is worth considering the gains from movement for labour. The intermediate and long-term positive effects of migration should weight more than the emotional and often prejudicial political manipulation of migration debates. For this reason, nations should adopt a person-centred approach to migration that takes into account the concrete contributions that result from what is often an expression of human creativity and entrepreneurship. The positive effects and potential of migration calls for serious analysis and for recommendations for global action on urgent concerns: access to a territory and asylum when needed, respect of fundamental human rights and recognition of innate and acquired rights for all migrants.

These reflections arise from consideration of persons that leave their countries of birth and persons displaced within their own countries due to conditions of conflict, persecution or oppression that put their very lives and futures at risk,<sup>3</sup> as well as categories of migrants demanding renewed attention, especially domestic workers and workers in general.

2. Access to Territory for Asylum Seekers. In early July 2013, Pope Francis chose Lampedusa as the destination for his first trip outside Rome since assuming office as Pope. This island between Southern Italy and the African continent, in the Mediterranean Sea, where more than 20,000 African immigrants have lost their lives in recent years while trying to escape abject poverty, cruel wars and ethnic violence in unseaworthy boats. There he launched a challenge, which seems most appropriate for the work of this Council: "In this globalized world, we have fallen into globalized indifference. We have become used to the suffering of others: it doesn't affect me; it doesn't concern me; it's none of my business!"<sup>4</sup>

Three months later, the same venue marked the tragic deaths of more than 300 migrants seeking freedom and a dignified life who perished in a fire that broke out on their unseaworthy vessel. In expressing his personal grief at this disaster, Pope Francis reminded the international community of the "shame" that we all must bear for denying, ignoring, or merely tolerating such conditions inflicted upon our sisters and brothers in the human family.

The Director-General of this Organization has made his own visit to Lampedusa, and recalled that these tragedies are not just being witnessed in the Mediterranean but also in Asia, the South China Sea, the Atlantic, and the Gulf of Aden and in the sands of deserts. He pointed out that "these deaths are taking place on a frightening scale", and urged that

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<sup>3</sup> In fact, the 2012 World Disasters Report estimated some 72 million forced migrants in the world, who "face serious humanitarian and human rights challenges. With their support systems removed, they are often unable to access basic health, welfare and education services. They may lose links with families and communities, and experience severe socio-economic loss and impoverishment."

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130708\\_omelia-lampedusa\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130708_omelia-lampedusa_en.html)

"the top priority now has to be saving life..."<sup>5</sup> Good planning and data collection providing sound labour market needs assessment and a renewed commitment to everyone's right to work, to family unity, to equity, to human security and to solidarity can help the opening of legal migration channels and prevent useless loss of lives. IOM can continue to remind member states of their responsibilities to provide access to fair status determination procedures.

Chairperson,

3. Respect for Human Rights. The inalienable rights of all migrants must be recognized and respected, as the Declaration of the High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development affirms. My Delegation makes a strong "appeal for the protection of the dignity and centrality of every person, respecting his fundamental rights."<sup>6</sup> "All [persons], in fact, enjoy rights and duties that are not arbitrary, because they stem from human nature itself,"<sup>7</sup> and "thus are... universal, inviolable, [and] inalienable."<sup>8</sup>

With much regret, the Holy See notes increasing trends toward infringement of the rights of migrants, many of whom become victims of extortion and trafficking and are held against their will and in inhuman conditions, whose identity documents are confiscated, and who are subjected to physical and psychological violence. An increasing number of governments, in fact, make it extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, for those fleeing for their lives to reach territory where they might make a claim for protection. Migrants who manage to enter another country are frequently held in detention centers for protracted periods, sometimes without the opportunity to present a request for asylum in a timely way or to pursue other legitimate claims for legal residency. Summary expulsions have also become commonplace.

The relationship between rights and development is at the heart of the migration and development dialogue. Respect for rights enhances the ability of migrants to contribute to their countries of origin and destination. Irregular or unauthorized status makes it harder for migrants to earn as much and thus to contribute as much to their new communities and to invest as substantially in their countries of origin as those with more secure status. Respect for rights contributes to the stability, reputation, human capital and growth of

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Ambassador William Lacy Swing, Director-General of the International Organization for Migration, Vatican Radio 14 October 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Address of Pope Francis to the Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Travelers, Vatican City, 24 May 2013, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/speeches/2013/may/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130524\\_migranti-itineranti\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/may/documents/papa-francesco_20130524_migranti-itineranti_en.html)

<sup>7</sup> Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Travelers, Vatican City, 28 May 2012 [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2010/may/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20100528\\_migranti\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2010/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20100528_migranti_en.html)

<sup>8</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, Encyclical Letter on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty, Vatican City, 11 April 1963, #5, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html)



migrant-sending nations, and thus encourages investment by expatriates, diaspora groups and others. At the same time, respect for migrant rights in receiving countries increases the socioeconomic wellbeing of immigrants and thus their potential to contribute to the development of sending and receiving communities.

My Delegation particularly supports IOM's approach to the scourge of human trafficking which links the victims of trafficking to other migrants in situations of vulnerability and seeks to promote migration control systems which are respectful of human rights.

4. Finally, Chairperson, due recognition is called for the rights of migrants acquired in the destination country. These rights, based often on the development of strong equitable ties, facilitate integration and are a requirement of justice and a contribution to the common good and to peaceful coexistence.

My Delegation feels a deep obligation as well to plead for proper care and attention to child migrants, consistent with their best interests. Increasing numbers of unaccompanied minor migrants have been reported in North America and elsewhere. For example, statistics from Mexico's National Migration Institute indicate that in 2012 between January and July, 3,391 Guatemalan, Honduran and Salvadoran children were deported, 50 percent more than in the same period in 2011. Of these, 2,801 were unaccompanied, many of whom became victims of "coyotes" or people smugglers.<sup>9</sup> The United States has reported a tripling of unaccompanied minors crossing its border with Mexico over a four-year period.<sup>10</sup>

5. Conclusion. Chairperson, I will conclude by citing the Declaration of the High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, in which key policy-makers and expert practitioners associated with both governments and civil society organizations reaffirmed "the need to promote and protect effectively the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants," resolved "to address international migration through international, regional or bilateral cooperation and dialogue, through a comprehensive and balanced approach," and to avoid approaches that might aggravate "the vulnerability of migrants."<sup>11</sup> In this way, the debate on the post 2015 priorities can become the occasion to look in a new, positive way at migration as an enabler of development and a constructive shaper of history.

Thank you, Chairperson.

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<sup>9</sup> "Mexico: The End of the Dream for Child Migrants," InterPress Service News Agency, November 5, 2012, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/10/mexico-the-end-of-the-american-dream-for-child-migrants/>

<sup>10</sup> Pamela Prah, "Number of Undocumented Children Who Cross U.S. Border Alone Has Tripled," 9 May 2013, <http://www.pewstates.org/projects/stateline/headlines/number-of-undocumented-children-who-cross-us-border-alone-has-tripled-85899474787>; Center for Migration Studies of New York, "The Rise in Unaccompanied Minors: A Global Humanitarian Crisis," 15 October 2012, <http://cmsny.org/2012/10/15/the-rise-in-unaccompanied-minors-a-global-humanitarian-crisis/>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/L.5&referer=http://www.un.org/en/ga/68/meetings/migration/&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/L.5&referer=http://www.un.org/en/ga/68/meetings/migration/&Lang=E)