



## PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE

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Statement of H.E. Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi , Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and the International Organizations at Geneva at the 94<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council of the International Organization for Migration  
27-30 November 2007

Mr. President,

1. The diversity of population movements around the world has increasingly caught the attention of international organizations and States: temporary and permanent migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, trafficked women and men, multinational corporations transferred personnel. New categories emerge like internal and cross-borders' displaced people forced to move by the degradation of the environment, certain types of development projects and climate change. The Delegation of the Holy See appreciates the strategic choice made by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to address the migratory phenomenon from "an integral and holistic perspective" while focusing on its specific mandate. While targeted responses render effective the protection and assistance due to all uprooted persons, a comprehensive perspective is needed. In fact, today's economic and political interdependence has shown that international migrations have become a structural component of modern societies. In particular, the global labour market attracts workers from an ever wider range of countries, making the migration for work the largest segment of all population movements. People vote with their feet, searching to meet their aspirations for security and a decent life for themselves and their families.

2. Estimates now give more than 200 million persons in the world living and working in countries different than the one in which they were born or were citizens and the 90 million workers among them are almost three percent of the three-billion strong labour force. The numbers, in a way, are the tip of the iceberg revealing the complexity of a phenomenon that affects countries of origin, transit and destination, laws and administrative regulations, cultural, religious and social modalities of coexistence. A cooperative approach to migrations becomes unavoidable and it should be inclusive of States, intergovernmental bodies, civil society. Non-governmental organizations and faith-communities in particular, with their ear to the ground and a geographically diversified experience, can provide insights and collaboration both in policy formation and in operational assistance. This Delegation appreciates as a positive development the formalized process for exchange of views and information on the part of the Heads of United Nations' agencies with

responsibility for one or the other aspect of human mobility. But coherence among the various players seems still at an initial stage and it would be beneficial if some participation of representatives of migrants' organizations and interests would be included at all levels of policy development.

3. Migrant workers, skilled and unskilled, have taken central place in many current debates. This type of migration is looked at as a positive force for development of countries of origin, especially through the billions of dollars in remittances sent home by the migrants, – US\$ 167 billion sent to developing countries in 2005 – as well for the economy of receiving countries. In fact, for a growing number of countries, immigrants have become a necessity to compensate for the dwindling workforce and for their demographic deficit. But the pragmatic advantages accepted through the admission of migrants are on several occasions overshadowed by an ambivalent attitude that is manifest in media and public opinion that allow for stereotyping and negative generalizations of newcomers. Fairness in recognizing the contribution immigrants make can serve as a good base for their integration.

4. Two important dimensions of contemporary migrations are not adequately discussed and paid attention to in the formulation of policies: the victims of migration flows and the priority that persons have over the economy. The whole system of protection and of human rights is relegated to a secondary supporting role instead of serving as it was intended, as an assurance that the dignity of all human persons must take precedence. Just a few days ago, 64 migrants drowned before the shores of Yemen, where the previous month another 66 desperate asylum seekers had died or were missing after being thrown overboard by traffickers. Some media report that about 500 persons have met their death this year in the dangerous enterprise of crossing illegally from Mexico into the United States. As many as 6,000 people have died or disappeared in 2006 alone just trying to cross the waters from the West coast of Africa to the Canary Islands. Unaccompanied children are found in these traumatic flows across seas and borders. New creative forms of prevention, of humanitarian assistance and protection mechanisms are called for.

5. An inclusive approach that takes into account all components of the migrants' journey: the decisions to emigrate and of how many immigrants to admit; the modalities of participation of various types of migrants in the host society; the role played by migrants in the economic development and in society; the migrants' entitlement to protection and the exercise of their rights, seems the appropriate way to proceed. Present political trends appear clear and slanted in the direction of responding to the more emotional and vocal demands of public opinion for control and integration. In the long run, however, a fair and effective solution will come from a comprehensive approach that embraces all policy components: the rights of the State and of the receiving community, of the migrants, and of the international common good. A growing consensus supports the convenience of such an inclusive approach and the necessity to pay more attention to migrants themselves and not only

to their economic role as temporary workforce or permanent settlers. International treaties and conventions that directly, or in a general way, include references to the rights of migrants have adopted the centrality of the human person as their supporting base. In a parallel way, the social teaching of the Catholic Church, and in fact that of all religious traditions, looks at migrants as human beings in the first place and then as citizens or guests, or as economic and cultural agents. The ethical dimension in the discussion of migration results from a larger anthropological framework in which secular and religious people can find a common ground in order to address the inevitable tension between different principles. In the case of migrants, this tension appears in the moral obligations of governments to ensure the safety and well-being of their own populations and a more universal ethic that values the well-being of all mankind and of each person. In this sense, the High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development could state: "Respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of all migrants was considered essential for reaping the full benefits of international migration."

Mr. President,

6. As the concerted effort to refine ways and means to manage the different aspects of human mobility moves forward, the Delegation of the Holy See considers it more urgent to muster the political will to ratify and implement the human rights' instruments already developed and to make them the foundation of a truly humane and comprehensive policy. Education can play a major role. Migrants, aware of their rights, can be more secure in offering their services and talents and the receiving community, well informed and respectful of these rights, will feel freer in extending its solidarity in order to build together a common future.