



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE

Statement by H.E. Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi , Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations Office and the International Organizations at Geneva at the 92nd Session of the Council of the International Organization for Migration
November 28 – December 1, 2006

Mr. President,

1. Migrants are now a felt priority by the international community and have figured prominently in media headlines and in many recent events and debates dealing with political elections, international and regional governmental meetings, in scholarly conferences. There is an obvious awareness and a concern that migrants in the North and South of the globe are important players in political, economic and social life. In fact, their image has taken up the traditional ambivalence of the immigrants' needed contribution and suspicion with renewed intensity. The international community has entered a period of search on how to handle migration governance and on how to evaluate the impact of immigrants on population changes, on the economy, on the opportunity they offer for dialogue among cultures and faiths. All these signs of interest are encouraging and indicate a will to tackle realistically the phenomenon of global migration. Such an attitude is wise since by all indicators migrations will continue as an important fact of our times due to persisting economic disparities, to their role for demographic complementarity, to the failure of the international community to prevent conflicts and the consequent uprooting of people.

The Delegation of the Holy See acknowledges and supports the fact that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is an active and well experienced leader in the on-going process of developing an adequate management for the increasing movement of people. While it will take time and a determined convergence of efforts to find an acceptable institutional framework, this approach appears ever more convincingly the appropriate option. In the meantime, a re-examination of the way we think about migration seems also in order by expanding our reflection beyond national boundaries and to include a globalization of solidarity as a means to a peaceful living together in the national and international contexts.

2. Success in the global search for a coherent migration policy will come about if some conditions are met:

- if the approach is comprehensive by addressing , among others, issues of politics, human rights, trade, investments, remittances and development as they affect countries of origin, transit and destination of migrants;
- if the concern for security does not turn into just a restrictive logic in order to hinder migrants from entering a country, but becomes an orderly, rationalized and coordinated relationship between available human resources and the need for manpower in receiving societies and the mechanism the IOM is developing to better match the supply with the demand seems a worthy innovation;
- if all stakeholders are actively involved and collaborate: intergovernmental agencies, governments, civil society actors, including the private sector and the migrants themselves in some appropriate form;

- if the migrants themselves, their human dignity and rights, are placed at the center of current debates and formulations of policies, not just as functional instruments of specific economic and demographic planning, but as protagonists in a common project.

Migration is rightly perceived as an issue that cuts across the North-South divide, as a message reminding everyone of our common humanity. The lesson of history is that migrants enrich cultures and societies and that trans-national families and communities create bridges of understanding and productive inter-action. It shows that the most important resource of all is the human person.

3. A sustainable ethical policy enhances and does not limit reaching economic goals, development and the possibility of living together. Migrations are a dynamic, almost unruly social reality. They are subjected to changes brought about by labor opportunities, political decisions, individual choices of migrants when they can make them, by globalization factors and social networks. Thus a solid, human rights based ethical approach gives a steady orientation and a sense of coherence to both policy and strategy. A fair ethical dimension provides a balanced foundation to the action of the State, of the migrants, and to their respective interests, and it cannot be left out of the current migration discussions. In this perspective, for example, it would make good sense to diversify channels of entry for migrants to prevent irregular flows and to take into account, on the one hand, skilled and professional potential migrants who could be tied to work contracts abroad without forgetting their responsibility to the development needs of their own countries and, on the other hand, unskilled migrants who are required for family services, agriculture and various industries. With clear rules, fairness is well served and bureaucratic discretionality limited. The question of integration as well takes on new meaning. If the economy of the receiving countries benefits from the work of the immigrants – obviously it cannot do without them – the life aspirations of the immigrants must be attended to, and the possibility to integrate must be given. National legislation cannot aim at regulating only the flows of services and jobs without taking into account the person that provides those services. For this reason, family reunification must be a primary consideration: the family plays a fundamental role in the integration process, in giving stability to the presence of the immigrants in the new social environment, and even in the dynamics of temporary migrations.

4. More and more the public discourse addresses migration policies with the expectation that they should be based on human rights and within an enlarged ethical insight that points out duties and rights for individuals and States. A clear convergence is emerging in the international community on an ethical vision that is supported by the four pillars of respect of the dignity of every person, of search of the common good of the national community, not as an insulated and self-centered goal, but within the universal good of an interconnected and globalized world, and of an all-embracing solidarity. On such a foundation, negotiated policies will become more transparent and obtain a larger social consensus.

Mr. President,

People criss-cross the globe in larger numbers, agents and sometimes victims of globalization. A coalition of interests would be insufficient to produce a just global policy. Building a multilateral system of rules and principles that maximize the public good that human mobility is, demands an inclusive dialogue that stands on an ethical base centered on the human person and that aims at making migration a choice rather than a necessity.

Thanks you, Mr. President.