



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations
and Other International Organizations in Geneva
International Organization for Migration (IOM) – 107th Session of the Council
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Mr. Chairperson,

The Delegation of the Holy See wishes to congratulate the Director General and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on its 65th anniversary and commend its dedication in promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all.

This year will be remembered as particularly significant for the IOM and for global migration: the IOM formally entered a closer legal and working relationship with the United Nations, becoming a Related Organization. In addition, last September the world came together in a UN General Assembly Summit of Heads of State on refugees and migrants – indeed, for the first time in 71 years, the focus was also on migration - and adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

At the same time, regrettably, 2016 will also go down in history as the year when large numbers of migrants, well over six-thousand, lost their lives in search of a better life. Pope Francis has repeatedly expressed concern for migrants through his words and actions, and he has assumed direct responsibility for migrant issues within the new Curial Dicastery for integral human development.

Mr. Chairperson,

The number of people on the move in search of better opportunities, often fleeing from conflicts, famine, religious persecution, climate change and natural disasters, continues to increase incessantly.

The motives for migration movements should cause us to question seriously our achievements as a human family and urge us to create what Pope Francis defined as a new "social economy" based on inclusion and justice, serving the many, not the few, and ultimately making migration an opportunity and a choice rather than a compelling decision.

What is even worse, migrants are often treated as numbers and commodities, and are too often perceived as a threat instead of a resource for the host society. It is important to remember that behind the statistics are persons who are no different from our own family members and friends, "each of them with a name, a face, a story and aspirations, as well as an inalienable right to live in peace" (Pope Francis, *Address to members of the European Confederation and World Union of Jesuit Alumni and Alumnae*, Rome, 17 September 2016).

The transfer of resources, skills, knowledge, and ideas through migration is substantial but it is often overlooked. Moreover, the local integration in the host countries remains a critical challenge: many migrants continue to live and to work in precarious conditions and they face stereotyping and discrimination; they are often marginalized and without access to social services. When migrants are not integrated into society they become isolated, creating a dangerous culture of mutual distrust and suspicion. We need to replace such a culture with a culture of dialogue and encounter.

Migration, integration and development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing phenomena. The great

contribution of migrants becomes real and effective when they are recognized as partners in economic development, when their human rights are respected and, at the same time, when they appreciate the basic values of the host society, aware that a better and just future may be built only together.

Mr. Chairperson,

The New York Declaration is a positive change of attitude and an attempt to build bridges among societies. It expresses the political will to save lives, protecting the dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, regardless of their migratory status, at all times (Para. 41, *New York Declaration*). It also acknowledges that migration is not a problem to be solved but a human reality that should be managed through a multilateral approach.

The Holy See wishes to express its support for the IOM's endeavors in this matter and wants to assure its readiness to collaborate actively in the negotiations leading to the Global Compact, bringing to bear its own experience in the field of international migration. Such a process should channel all efforts towards the achievement of significant and far-sighted results and it should be guided by a spirit of solidarity, by the centrality of the human person and his or her dignity and by a desire to promote integral human development.

In this regard, my Delegation fully supports and thanks the Director General, Ambassador William Lacy Swing, in his offer to serve as Secretary General of the inter-governmental conference in 2018 and for his proposal to dedicate the International Dialogue on Migration to the discussions on the Global Compact. At the same time, it could be useful to reconstitute the IOM-UN Working Group as a Working Group on the Global Compact on Migration in order to channel all efforts towards the achievement of significant and far-sighted results.

Mr. Chairperson,

Of particular concern for the Holy See is the vulnerability of child migrants, to whom Pope Francis dedicated his Message for the 2017 World Day of Migrants and Refugees. "...Children constitute the most vulnerable group, because as they face the life ahead of them, they are invisible and voiceless: their precarious situation deprives them of documentation, hiding them from the world's eyes; the absence of adults to accompany them prevents their voices from being raised and heard." (*Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2017*).

The number of children on the move is growing exponentially. All over the world, conflict affects 246 million children and many of them face forced displacement, rights violations, lack of access to basic services and health and nutrition challenges.¹ They often fall 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. Minors, given their vulnerability, have different needs than adults and policies must prioritize their best interests at all stages.

Mr. Chairperson,

Children are the first among those who pay the heavy price of migration, almost always caused by violence, poverty, environmental imbalances, and disasters, as well as the negative aspects of globalization. Let us be brave and resolute in our commitment to tackle the causes which trigger forced migration in the countries of origin.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

¹ *Refugee_and_Migrant_Crisis_Advocacy_Web_12_11_15.pdf*