



**Statement of H.E. Archbishop Fortunatus Nwachukwu, Apostolic Nuncio,  
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other  
International Organizations in Geneva at the 113<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council of  
the International Organization for Migration (IOM)**

*Geneva, 1 December 2022*

Mr. Chair,

At the outset, allow me to extend to Barbados, on behalf of the Holy See, a warm welcome to the IOM family. Congratulations on your election.

Last year, in a message to this Council on the occasion of IOM's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Pope Francis said that, "migrants are increasingly being used as bargaining chips, as pawns on a chessboard, victims of political rivalries. As we all know, the decision to emigrate, to leave one's homeland or territory of origin, is undoubtedly one of the most difficult decisions in life."<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, the international situation does not seem to have improved since then. Human suffering and desperation continue to be exploited in order to defend and even advance political agendas. Without ignoring the political and legal aspects of irregular migration, we must never lose sight of the human face of migration and the fact that, beyond the geographical divisions of borders, we are part of a single human family.<sup>2</sup>

Migrants are more than numbers or part of a quota to meet each year. While their integration is challenging and States must cooperate to properly manage mixed flows, it is important to remember that behind the statistics are persons no different from our own family members and friends. In this regard, the Holy See wishes to ask the Council to pause and reflect on the language frequently used in political and policy debates about migration. For instance, "burden-sharing", "redistribution" and "reallocation". Such expressions are inherently reductive and characterize migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as commodities or "liabilities".

Mr. Chair,

The root causes of migration and forced displacement call into question our achievements as a human family, including in the area of social justice. While States are obligated to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people on the move, it is also crucial that the international community help create conditions which allow communities and individuals to live in safety and dignity in their Countries of origin, consistent with paragraph 13 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

In this regard, it is past time to acknowledge that, when people must flee, it is not enough to encourage increased coordination among States in the area of their search and rescue (SAR), disembarkation and resettlement. Instead, there is a serious need to reconsider and reform the current approach to managing mixed flows at international borders and at sea. If not, the current chaos that results in countless acts of violence, abuse and increasing loss of life, particularly in the Mediterranean, will only get worse.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Message of H.H. Pope Francis to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Organization for Migration, Geneva, 29 November 2021.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Intervention of the Holy See during the 2022 International Dialogue on Migration – Panel 1, Geneva, 24 October 2022.

Mr. Chair,

Notwithstanding the complexities that come with migration, the perceived challenges must not obscure the opportunities and contributions offered by migrants. Migration has to be approached with confidence, as an opportunity to build peace, and not as a threat. In this regard, the importance of integration, in a spirit of mutual knowledge and reciprocal openness and respect, cannot be stressed enough. This includes the laws and traditions of the host countries, which should always encourage a culture of encounter and solidarity.

In closing, confronted by the numerous challenges of contemporary migration and forced displacement, “cooperation” and “solidarity” should be the watchwords for this Council and its Members. State policy responses should be centred on safety and the protection of human dignity and life. They should be concerned with the well-being of Countries and citizens, but also take into account the needs of the most vulnerable, especially in our increasingly interconnected world.

Thank you.