



Statement of the Holy See at the 115th Session of the Council of the International Organizations for Migration (IOM)

Geneva, 27 November 2024

Madam Chair,

With an estimated 281 million international migrants worldwide, it is clear that there is no escaping serious ethical discussions about migration and forced displacement.

It is regrettable that migration, which is an inherent part of our history as a human family, is very often obscured by sensationalized or partial narratives, and by ideological categorization. The reality on the ground is much more nuanced than what is usually portrayed. It is important to recognize that most international migration is regular and directly linked to job opportunities and studies abroad.

Notwithstanding the complexities of migration, the perceived challenges of today must not eclipse the opportunities and contributions that migrants offer. The phenomenon must be addressed in a balanced and equitable manner. The Holy See encourages a more effective dialogue among States, across the routes of origin, transit, and destination of migrants, in order to ensure a more respectful, integral, and humane approach to migration.

Madam Chair,

In the context of this Council, the Delegation of the Holy See wishes to draw attention to three key issues:

1) **Climate change and natural disasters.** It is essential to acknowledge that the climate crisis has a “human face”¹. In this regard, the Holy See appreciates the holistic and human-centered approach to the climate crisis through preparedness, disaster risk reduction and adaptation, adopted by the IOM. The effects of climate change are becoming increasingly evident. As Pope Francis recently affirmed: “defending the dignity and rights of climate migrants entails defending the sacredness of each human life and demanding respect for the divine command to care for and defend our common home.”²

2) **Integration.** An effective and sustainable migration policy requires a simultaneous and comprehensive integration strategy. Integration is a two-way process, based on mutual knowledge, openness and exchange of benefits between host communities and the newcomers. Integration cannot be mere assimilation, forcing

¹ Cf. Pope Francis, Address to the participants to the in the United Nations Conference on Climate in Madrid, 4 December 2019.

² Pope Francis, *Address to the Participants in the Summit of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences: “From Climate Crisis to Climate Resilience”*, 16 May 2024.

migrants to suppress or to abandon their respective cultural, social, linguistic, and religious identities. At the same time, it is important for migrants to know and fully respect the laws, culture and traditions of the countries that receive them, in a true spirit of encounter.

3) **Family unity and family reunification.** As we all know, the decision to migrate, to depart from one's homeland and to leave family and friends behind, is by far one of the most heartbreaking decisions in life. Migrants very often move out of necessity and concern for their families. While the remittances that migrants send "home" are important to promote development, improve health and foster education of their children, they cannot fully compensate for the human vacuum created when a father or a mother emigrates. Women domestic workers, for example, leave their children to care for children, the disabled, and the elderly abroad. In this context, the Delegation of the Holy See encourages the IOM to dedicate more reflection on an ethical, just, fair and family-friendly reform of migration policies, with the aim not only to guarantee the human rights of migrants, but also for the benefit of the receiving State.

Madam Chair,

Before concluding, this Delegation wishes to place on record that various documents, policies and programs developed by IOM contain language and concepts that have not been agreed, such as 'intersectionality'. Those concepts also appear, for example, in the IOM's Programme and Budget for 2025. In this regard, the Holy See notes the following:

1. With reference to "gender" the Holy See understands that the term refers to the biological sexual identity and difference that is male and female.
2. While appreciating the IOM's attention to non-discrimination in its workforce, workplace and activities, the Holy See underscores that non-discrimination should be interpreted in terms of the list contained in Article 2 of the UDHR.
3. With regard to "sexual and reproductive health and rights", the Holy See interprets those terms as referring to a holistic concept of health. Abortion, access to abortion, access to abortifacients or contraception do not constitute part of sexual and reproductive health and rights nor a dimension of these terms.
4. For the aforementioned reasons, a brief note should be included in the Program and Budget stating that the details of specific bilateral projects listed therein are for information purpose only and do not represent an endorsement by Member States. This approach would ensure that different views on the content of bilateral projects are respected.

Madam Chair,

While the achievement of an adequate global approach to migratory flows may seem an ambitious goal, the inescapable reality is that migrants will continue to cross borders and seek refuge in neighboring States, even when conditions in the host Country may cause serious difficulties. The Holy See reiterates its support to IOM for its invaluable work in providing comprehensive assistance to people on the move without discrimination and based on the inherent dignity of all members of the same human family. As Pope Francis has repeatedly said, migrants are not mere statistics, but real people whose lives are at stake. In this regard, the network of Catholic Church-inspired organizations and structures along the migratory routes and around the world will continue their mission to welcome, protect, promote and integrate people on the move.

Thank you, Madam Chair.