



MIGRANTS
REFUGEES

The Role of the Church and Civil Society in Negotiating the Global Compacts

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to start by thanking the Secretariat of the German Bishops Conference for inviting the Migrants & Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development to contribute to this important conference aimed at discussing the Church's perspectives on the Global Compacts on migration and refugees.

Today's event offers me the pleasant opportunity to explain the reasons for the Holy See's commitment to the success of the processes that will lead to the adoption of the two Global Compacts - one on refugees and one for safe, orderly and regular migration - in the second half of this year.

Under the direct guidance of Pope Francis, the Migrants & Refugees Section drafted the document titled "20 Action Points for the Global Compacts," which was delivered to the persons in charge of the two processes for the United Nations a few months ago. The 20 Action Points advocate effective and proven measures which together constitute an integral response to the current migration challenges. In accordance with Pope Francis's teaching, the points are grouped under four headings: to welcome, to protect, to promote, and to integrate. Each is an active verb and a call to action. Starting from what is currently possible, their ultimate goal is the building of an inclusive and sustainable common home for all.

Looking at the present scenario, welcoming means offering broader options for migrants and refugees to enter destination countries safely and legally. Protecting translates into concrete measures to uphold the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees, with particular attention to the most vulnerable ones. Promoting corresponds to ensuring that all migrants and refugees - as well as the communities which welcome them - are empowered to achieve their integral human development. Integrating means engaging locals and foreigners in intercultural processes towards mutual enrichment and active citizenship.

It was deemed appropriate to prepare a single document for the two Global Pacts based on the acknowledgment that migration is increasingly composed of mixed flows and that migrants and refugees, before being such, are persons inherently possessed of fundamental human rights and inalienable dignity. Furthermore, this decision intends to underline the importance of harmonizing the two Global Pacts as much as possible, so as to respond more adequately to the challenges of a very complex global migration scenario. Nevertheless, knowledgeable people will easily recognize in the text of the 20 Action Points the practical suggestions that pertain specifically to beneficiaries of international protection.

The document presents a series of practical considerations based on the experience of local Churches and Catholic organizations at the grassroots level. It suggests various best practices already in place which can be easily replicated in other geographical areas. Many such practices are already in place in Germany and this is why the Migrants & Refugees Section considers as essential the contribution that Germany, together with the other members of the European Union, can make to the Global Compacts processes. The principles and values on which the 20 Action Points are based represent the salient features of the integral humanism that originated in Europe and forged international constitutions and conventions.

In this connection, as Pope Francis observes, “the Europe of humanism, the champion of human rights, democracy and freedom, [...] the home of poets, philosophers, artists, musicians, and men and women of letters, [...] the mother of peoples and nations, the mother of great men and women who upheld, and even sacrificed their lives for, the dignity of their brothers and sisters”¹ is called once again to distinguish itself in this leading role. And where others are discouraged and give up, the States of the European Union, strong in their tradition, can take up the baton and encourage the international community to formulate a common response to global challenges and work for a better world, each according to their responsibility.

The generous welcome and commendable assistance offered to the asylum seekers and refugees who have arrived in recent years and the programs created to assist them demonstrate the seriousness of Germany's commitment to forced migrants. The Global Compact on Refugees represents the opportunity to involve other States in the same commitment in order to structure a broader and more effective common response.

Similarly, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration constitutes a favourable and timely opportunity to initiate an open and sincere dialogue among government leaders, “a dialogue that takes into account people’s actual experiences, sufferings and aspirations, in order to remind everyone once more of his or her

¹ Pope Francis, *Address for the Conferral of the Charlemagne Prize*, 6 May 2016.

responsibilities” aiming at setting “free those who today are oppressed, rejected and enslaved.”²

The Migrants & Refugees Section has urged the Bishops’ Conferences all over the world to explain the Compacts and the 20 Action Points to their parishes and Church organizations, with the hope of fostering more effective solidarity with migrants and refugees. Moreover the Section has encouraged all Bishops’ Conferences to engage in a constructive dialogue with their Governments on the 20 Action Points for the Global Compacts. Today’s conference is a concrete example of the many positive responses the Section has received from local Churches to its call.

The same invitation was addressed to religious congregations and Catholic organizations all over the world. Many of them have joined the Bishops Conferences in the dissemination and promotion of the 20 Action Points at the national and local levels. Their valuable engagement has been instrumental for the development and launching of new programs inspired by this document. At the global level, most of the Catholic organizations with ECOSOC status have shaped their advocacy work for the Global Compacts on the 20 Action Points and coordinated their action with the Permanent Missions of the Holy See in Geneva and New York.

The Migrant & Refugee Section is looking “forward” to the adoption of the Global Compacts, but it is also looking “beyond” the Compacts. Together with its partners, the Section is committed to ensuring that, “as a sign of shared global responsibility, concrete engagement follows from the words that will be codified in the aforementioned two agreements.”³ As we all know, the Compacts can only provide a suitable framework for a better understanding of the complex phenomenon of migration in its multiple facets and for formulating effective responses to its different challenges. The real action will be up to the individual States in necessary collaboration with other stakeholders. As Pope Francis said in February 2017, to welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrants and refugees requires “the efforts of all actors, among which, you may be assured will always be the Church.”⁴

Thank you!

² Pope Francis, *Address to to the Members of the Plenary Council of the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)*, 8 March 2018.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ Pope Francis, *Address to the Participants of the International Forum on “Migration and Peace”*, 21 February 2017.