

Statement by H.E. Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio
Head of Delegation

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Madam President,

It is clear from our discussions over these two days that migration is an essential element of the interdependence and exchange among nation states that forms part of the phenomenon of globalization. It forms people in a global dimension and in new relationships of interdependence, while the growth of the global economy depends more and more on international migration. But migration is also a great source of human concern, since it involves the lives and dignity of many hundreds of millions of people.

One of the most controversial elements of this topic is that of irregular migration. The Holy See recognizes the sovereign right of nations to determine who may enter and who may remain in a given state. At the same time, states have a grave duty to protect the rights of all persons, be they irregular migrants or not, and to cooperate in readmitting those who are obliged or wish to return, whether they are voluntarily or involuntarily returning to their home countries. A migrant's legal status is quite separate from his or her human dignity, since all of them without exception are endowed with inalienable rights, which can neither be violated nor ignored.

Both sending and receiving states have a responsibility to respect and implement commitments to international human rights law to ensure the protection of all migrants. It falls to states to guarantee the rights of individuals: the issue however, tends not to be a lack of law, but rather a lack of its implementation.

As for authorized and long-term migrants, their full integration is required to enhance social harmony and cohesion and to maximize the contribution that migrants make to their new society. Migrants should respect the cultural and religious identities of the host nations and the rights and duties constituted by citizenship, and be encouraged to integrate socially as well as contribute economically in their receiving countries. The public perception of migrants also needs to be improved through courageous political leadership and much more informed, dispassionate media coverage.

One particular concern of the Holy See is the situation of migrants who are forced to migrate against their will, not only refugees, but also those who are trafficked, many times for immoral purposes and human slavery.

Of all the issues before states in this High-level Dialogue, perhaps the most difficult one is that of the governance of migration. Important national, regional and international decisions in areas such as development, trade and labour markets are rarely considered in terms of their impact on migration. More effective consultation between governments and other stakeholders is required if coherent practices are to be developed. In this regard, it is our belief that, if states were to cooperate more broadly with one another, they would be exercising rather than diminishing their sovereignty.

So far, progress has been made in developing informal consultative processes among governments at the regional level, but my delegation agrees with those who believe the time is ripe to consider developing a global consultative process that would allow governments who so wish to forge constructive approaches to transform the positive potential of international migration for development into a reality. This global process would build on regional processes and serve as the link between governments and the Global Migration Group, in order to ensure that the activities of the UN system, together with IOM, are mutually reinforcing and lead to a sum truly greater than its parts. It would be a standing body involving governments with first-hand experience in addressing migration challenges. In order to accommodate concerns, we also believe that such a forum should be states-driven, voluntary and non-binding in its consultations. In this context, we welcome the offer to hold a meeting next year in Belgium to look into this initiative.

To sum up, Madam President, root causes must be tackled so that people are not obliged to leave home in order to find decent work; migrant protection, especially of refugees and those who are trafficked or smuggled, must be better addressed; regularization is needed for those who deserve it or give their contribution to the host society, even if they have arrived in an undocumented or unauthorized manner, in order to foster an environment capable of overcoming the persistent phenomena of discrimination, violence, human trafficking and xenophobia.

Only through international collaboration and an honest assessment at home of the benefits of migration will this phenomenon be addressed in a way that is decent and humane.

Thank you, Madam President.