

Statement for the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) Manila, 26-29 October 2008

Caritas Internationalis, the global confederation of 162 Catholic charities, promotes integral human development. Namely, an integral approach that takes into consideration the well-being of the person and of all people in their different dimensions: economic, social, political, cultural, ecological and spiritual – in order to achieve a just society.

The protection, empowerment and integration of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, trafficked people and other forcibly displaced populations and stateless persons are therefore a key concern for Caritas Internationalis.

Caritas Internationalis shares the view of other organizations that the participation of civil society in the Global Forum on Migration is still insufficient and the process for the participation needs improvement in terms of transparency. Caritas Internationalis emphasizes the call for larger participation of civil society in the Forum, and for participation to reflect a diversity of international actors, a gender dimension and geographic considerations, as well as a strong representation of migrants themselves.

Nevertheless, the Global Forum initiative is a unique opportunity to bring together a wide range of relevant actors in the field of migration and development. Caritas Internationalis hopes that the Forum will facilitate dialogue in a constructive way that aims to benefit all affected people and specifically those living in poverty and the marginalized.

In this regard, Caritas Internationalis calls on governments and all relevant stakeholders to put emphasis on migration and development, the rights of undocumented migrants, and the empowerment of migrant women.

Migration and Development: Give greater priority to economic and social policies which foster development and decrease forced migration.

In any discussion of migration and development –the right not to be compelled to migrate should be an essential element to be addressed. A renewed commitment to the MDGs as a means by which economic and social marginalization, primary drivers of involuntary and/or irregular migration should be incorporated into the Forums response.

The Global Forum on Migration and Development should lead to concrete outcomes with targets to be rigorously pursued towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Throughout the world, the poor (and those who aren't poor) use migration as a livelihood and income diversification strategy. However, when the poor do migrate it is often forced and this may prolong their destitution.

The discussions should focus on how development can create conditions in countries of origin in order to make migration a question of choice rather than necessity.

Caritas Internationalis calls for:

- Legal and safe channels for labour migration: The development of policies which allow for legal and safe migration are essential to make migration an option and avoid exploitation and hardship.
- The voice of the affected should be heard: It is of paramount importance that the voice of those affected; migrants, prospective and forced migrants as well as people of developing countries are heard and empowered through dialogue on migration and development.

The rights of undocumented migrants: Many examples show that keeping migrants in an irregular status makes them extremely vulnerable to trafficking, exploitation, the drugs trade and that it presents a serious threat to peaceful co-existence in society. Our experience over the past few years has shown that the solution does not lie in restrictive migration policies but rather in efforts to provide people with opportunities, both in their countries of origin and in the countries of destination, where they can contribute to a peaceful society.

Caritas calls for:

- Regularization schemes for undocumented migrants based on certain criteria (health reasons, family ties, and education of children) should be included as part of the solution.
- Access to health care is a basic right that should not be denied to undocumented migrants.
- Children should have access to education independently from the legal status of their parents.
- Labour Rights: Undocumented migrants should have the possibility to claim labour rights.
- Efficient measures against racism and xenophobia must be taken, including education in schools, denouncing and convicting racist and xenophobic acts and promoting a welcoming society.

The empowerment of migrant women: Recent figures show almost half of worldwide migrants are women. More women migrate on their own to support their families and provide for the education of their children. Many migrant women work as domestic workers or care

workers for the elderly as wealth in developed countries and the demographic decline foster a demand for a labour force providing services to people and households.

Firstly, Caritas Internationalis calls for the regulation of the labour market sector to avoid exploitation and to provide decent working conditions. Caritas Internationalis calls on the international community to promote and implement measures that advance the empowerment of women as well as measures to implement gender equality.

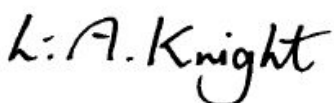
Caritas calls for:

- Protection of women on the migration journey: Appropriate structures should be put in place to provide assistance, shelter and counselling.
- Emphasis must be placed on protection and assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings, with special attention on children and young people.
- Women and youngsters should be educated about their human rights.
- Migrant women should have access to participation in the design of a gender sensitive migration policy

Caritas will monitor the progress of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals as they contribute to **migration becoming an informed option rather than an involuntary necessity**.

Caritas Internationalis will continue to raise awareness within its own membership and collect good practice examples of the beneficial links between migration and development. Moreover Caritas Internationalis will collect evidence on the impact of female migration on relationships, families and societies, the so-called “social costs”. A conference in 2010 will be devoted to this subject.

Vatican City, 23rd October 2008



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