



PRESS RELEASE

MUTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND BENEFITS: INTEGRATING MIGRANTS IN HOST SOCIETIES

On 30 November 2017, the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva, the Permanent Observer Mission of the Order of Malta to the United Nations in Geneva, the International Catholic Migration Commission, and the *Caritas in Veritate* Foundation, organized a Special Event in conjunction with the 108th Session of the Council of the International Organization For Migration (IOM), on the theme: “Mutual Contributions and Benefits: Integrating Migrants in Host Societies.” A booklet including the Message of Pope Francis for the 2018 World Day of Migrants and Refugees and the 20 Action Points for Refugees and Migrants that the Holy See submitted as an official contribution to the Global Compact was distributed to all participants. **His Eminence Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Archbishop of München and Freising, President of the German Bishops’ Conference and President of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community**, delivered the keynote address. The event was moderated by His Excellency Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva. A large number of Delegations, UN Agencies and NGOs co-sponsored and attended the meeting, among others, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, European Union, France, Gabon, Germany, Italy, Japan, Monaco, Morocco, Netherlands, Philippines, Uganda, USA, International Organization for Migration, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Caritas Internationalis, Forum of Catholic Inspired NGOs in Geneva.

Ambassador William L. Swing, Director-General of the International Organization for Migration, delivered the opening remarks highlighting the importance of integration as one of the most critical elements of successful immigration. He called for all to embrace migration, and to accept the opportunities host societies have of benefitting from the important contributions migrants can make to them. He stressed that diversity is a value in itself and that people have to deal with the fear of the other. IOM has also launched a programme called “I am a migrant” where migrants explain the situation in which they are now. In his keynote speech, **His Eminence Cardinal Reinhard Marx** pointed out that integration should be guided by participation and inclusion (language, education and work) which required a change of perception away from migrants being regarded as passive suppliants begging for favors, to persons who dare a new beginning and who strive for the well-being of themselves, their families and the society they live in. For Cardinal Marx integration should be a two-way road that benefits and requires efforts from all parties involved in order to develop a sense of belonging to a community. The responsibility for the common good needs to be shared among the host society and the migrants and should be driven by mutual recognition and esteem. He warned against the danger of turning positive identities into negative ones and of using Christianity as an instrument of exclusion. Therefore, interreligious cooperation also needs to be strengthened.

For **Mr. El Habib Nadir, Secretary General of the Ministry Delegate to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Morocco, in charge of Moroccans living abroad and Migration Affairs, Co-Chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development**, migration was beneficial for everybody: countries of origin and destination, as well as migrants themselves. Integration involves the whole of the society, including civil society, the media and religious authorities. The former should avoid stigmatizing narratives, while the latter should promote interreligious dialogue and “words of wisdom”. Mr. Nadir outlined the vast national programmes of integration the country has and its willingness to work in favor of positive integration. He warned the international community that we are about to abandon our values of solidarity and mutual respect and that now was the time to react and act.

Ambassador Stephen de Boer, Permanent Representative of Canada to the World Trade Organization, exposed the Canadian model of “managed immigration” where at the beginning of each year the number of people entering the country is decided. He also stressed that by 2030, 80 percent of Canada’s net growth was due to migrants and that diversity should be regarded as a source of strength and competitive advantage. Through resettlement, inclusive laws and policies, work placement, mentoring, networking opportunities and other admission channels, including humanitarian programs, Canada continues to have a steady immigration flow. **Ms. Carol Batchelor, Director of the International Protection Department of the UNHCR**, pointed out the importance of regarding refugees as individuals where each one of them has a different story to tell. Integration requires the involvement of many actors, including national and local governments as well as civil society and faith-based organizations. While local administrations need to be at the center of coordination and action, partnerships and collaboration should involve the private sector and civil society organizations. She ended her intervention by raising a question of what do we mean by integration, integration into what?

Speaking from the floor and as one of the co-organizers, **Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann, Permanent Observer of the Sovereign Order of Malta to the UN**, shared good practices from the Order of Malta Germany, where the Order was in charge of more than 140 facilities with more than 44.000 migrants. Some examples included the creation of integration services to make migrants familiar with the German society and culture and special units for unaccompanied minors. Also “*Malteser Migranten Medizin*” was set up for free medical care of migrants. Those examples showed the important role of faith-based organizations, providing both material and spiritual assistance. **Ms. Mantalin Kyrou, Policy Officer at the International Catholic Migration Commission**, another co-organizer, offered an example of how the two-way road works in practice. Talking out of her personal experience working with migrants in Germany, she told the story of a foreign worker and an immigration official who, after a first seemingly disastrous encounter in which mutual expectations did not match, managed to start afresh with some efforts on both sides.

Two co-sponsoring countries took the floor. First, the Ambassador of **Philippines** recalled the positive impact migrants have for the economic development, the cultural and social diversity of their country of origin and destination. He also outlined the importance of the Global Compact being a document that should bring along concrete terms of social cohesion and economic inclusion of migrants. Second, the **European Union** stressed social inclusion and the necessity of participation of women in local communities. Finally, **Caritas Internationalis** outlined the campaign “Share the journey” which was an example of raising awareness of forced migration.