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THE HOLY SEE AND THE GLOBAL COMPACTS
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With the vision communicated by the Holy Father and the objectives spelled out by the Cardinal Secretary of State, it is my happy task to review and explain the basic steps leading to the Global Compacts, especially the one on Migration, as the Holy See has accompanied, supported and contributed to the process for nearly two years since the New York Summit of September 2016.

I. The New York Summit launches two processes

Although we talk of global phenomena, migrants and refugees and their families are not themselves “global” in the same sense as something like climate change, which is indeed actually global. Rather, every migration or refugee situation is made up of local and particular factors, and every vulnerable migrant requires assistance and programs that are appropriate, concrete, and specific. That is, the migratory reality requires personalized treatment of unique individuals and families.

The most recent history begins with the dramatic mixed flows of asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants pouring into Europe in 2015-2016. This crisis motivated the U.N. to hold Summit in New York, where world leaders expressed their common desire to take decisive action to save the lives of migrants and refugees, to protect their rights, to address the root causes of large movements of refugees and migrants, and to share responsibility on a global level. Addressing the summit, Cardinal Pietro Parolin emphasized that

“in our efforts effectively to address the root causes of large movements of refugees and other forced migrants, we should also seek to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and hunger, achieve more substantial results in protecting

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the environment, ensure decent and productive work for all, provide access to quality training and adequately protect the family, essential to human and social development.”²

The N.Y. Declaration launched processes of consultation and negotiation to develop two new Global Compacts by the end of 2018.

A new agreement on refugees was needed, not as a reformulation of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, but as a way to develop new mechanisms, based on that Convention, that will better meet the needs, trials and sufferings of today’s asylum seekers. The GCR will provide a comprehensive refugee response framework to make the international refugee protection regime more effective and more efficient.

By contrast, although a 1990 convention dealt with migrant workers,³ until now there has been no international agreement or convention on migration in general. A sort of disorder has prevailed in this vast field, with up to one-seventh of humanity living outside the State in which they were born. With the *New York Declaration*, the international community finally began to attend to this great cross-cutting phenomenon in an orderly fashion.⁴ The purpose of the GCM will be to facilitate safe, orderly, regular and responsible migration.

Let us now watch a video-message of the Holy Father which eloquently presents the Catholic Church’s pastoral commitment as its full support for the Global Compacts processes.⁵

II. The work in New York and in Geneva

The process towards the GCM has been ably co-facilitated by Mexico and Switzerland. Throughout 2017, six informal thematic sessions were held to assemble concerns, experiences, ideas and proposals. The informality allowed delegations to appreciate the complexities and challenges of today’s migratory flows, and to express and listen to opinions without feeling bound to take an official position. The topics treated were: 1. Human rights of all migrants. 2. The right to remain in countries of origin. 3. International cooperation and governance of migration. 4. Contributions of migrants and diaspora to all dimensions of sustainable development. 5. Smuggling, trafficking and slavery. 6. Irregular migration and regular pathways.⁶

² Pietro Parolin, *Intervento "Alla radice del problema"* al Summit delle Nazioni Unite sui Migranti, New York, 19.09.2016. Translation ours.

³ The 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

⁴ Cf. *New York Declaration*, <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/declaration>

⁵ <https://youtu.be/dDlXrIY96ak>

⁶ The full titles: 1. Human rights of all migrants, social inclusion and cohesion, and all forms of discrimination including racism, xenophobia and intolerance. 2. Ensuring the right of all to remain in dignity, peace and security in their countries of origin. 3. International cooperation and governance of

And similarly the U.N.H.C.R. convoked five thematic discussions in Geneva to consider and generate ideas to be included in the GCR's programme of action: 1. Arrangements to share burdens and responsibilities. 2. The onset of large movements of refugees. 3. Meeting needs and supporting communities. 4. Durable solutions. 5. Cross-cutting issues.⁷

A year later, in September 2017, Mons. Gallagher noted the encouraging developments. He expressed the Holy See's conviction

"that these UN-led processes offer a unique opportunity to respond together to challenges through international cooperation and shared responsibility. The Holy See urges the international community to overcome the current political impasse and to go beyond the negative sentiments that we face in opening safe, orderly and regular pathways for migration. In order to achieve the desired outcome, the contribution of political communities, civil societies and all stakeholders is indispensable, each according to their own responsibilities."⁸

III. The Holy See accompanies, supports and contributes

Only a few weeks before the New York Summit, with his *Motu Proprio* of 7 August 2016, the Holy Father combined four Pontifical Councils⁹ into a new Dicastery or department to promote and serve integral human development. The idea originated with Blessed Paul VI, who declared that for development to be authentic, it "must be well-rounded [that is, integral]; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man."¹⁰ *Integral human development* is the name that describes the full ambit and scope of the Church's social ministry. Integral human development is what we desire for each and every person, including those who have in one way or another been forced to flee and therefore been rendered vulnerable.

The statutes of the Dicastery stipulate that one section will be concerned specifically with refugees and migrants, and that it will be placed *ad tempus* under the direct supervision of the Supreme Pontiff. The mission of the Migrants and Refugees

migration in all its dimensions, including at borders, transit, entry, return, readmission, integration and reintegration. 4. Contributions of migrants and diaspora to all dimensions of sustainable development, including remittances and portability of earned benefits. 5. Smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and contemporary forms of slavery, and appropriate identification, protection and assistance to migrants and trafficking victims. 6. Irregular migration and regular pathways, including decent work, labour mobility, recognition of skills and qualifications and other relevant measures.

⁷ The full titles: 1. Past and current burden- and responsibility-sharing arrangements. 2. Measures to be taken at the onset of a large movement of refugees. 3. Meeting needs and supporting communities. 4. Measures to be taken in pursuit of durable solutions. 5. Issues that cut across all four substantive sections of the framework, and overarching issues.

⁸ Paul Richard Gallagher, *Intervention*, 72nd Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, 26.09.2017.

⁹ The Pontifical Councils for Justice and Peace, for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, for Health Care Workers, and *Cor Unum*.

¹⁰ *Populorum Progressio* § 14.

(M&R) Section consists in supporting and helping the Bishops' Conferences and their Migration Commissions to share experiences, to learn from one another, and to work together in accompanying asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and people who have been trafficked.

It did not take long for the Holy Father to declare his orientation. In February 2017, considering the same troubling panorama that the *New York Declaration* sought to address a few months earlier, Pope Francis expressed

“particular concern for the forced nature of many contemporary migratory movements, which increases the challenges presented to the political community, to civil society and to the Church, and which amplifies the urgency for a coordinated and effective response to these challenges.”

The Holy Father went on to offer this compelling vision: “Our shared response may be articulated by four verbs: **to welcome, to protect, to promote** and **to integrate.**”¹¹ This encapsulates the Catholic Church's support for those going through difficult trials of human mobility. And the support applies to four phases: from the **decision** to leave to the time of **transit**, the complex phase of **arrival and integration**, until the possible **return**. In all circumstances, and in a process which can sometimes be very prolonged, we as Church are committed to accompanying those on the move by practicing these four action verbs.

As Mons. Gallagher stated, “The Holy See will vigorously work to have these four concepts enshrined and reflected in the future Global Compact on safe, orderly and regular migrations, and the Global Compact for refugees.”¹² Starting from this base, the M&R Section developed *20 Points for Pastoral Action*, which establish a working platform on which Church people can come together, review our experiences, and discern what the Lord wants of us.¹³ Those 20 Points form a simple but complete system or framework to facilitate the work of planning and evaluating the pastoral response being offered by a local Church, a Bishops' Conference, a diocese, or a parish. The framework can also be used in other contexts and by Catholic and non-Catholic organizations that want to work in this sector.

The 20 Action Points have also been stated in the governmental vocabulary of the United Nations, so that the Church leadership and groups and others in each country could approach their Government, dialogue with the authorities charged with these matters, and advocate the inclusion of tested values and good practices in the Global Compacts being discussed and negotiated.

¹¹ Pope Francis, Address to Participants in the International Forum on “*Migration and Peace*,” 21 February 2017.

¹² Paul Richard Gallagher, secretary for Relations with States, head of the Holy See Delegation to the 72nd Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, 25/26 September 2017. <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2017/09/26/170926b.html>

¹³ <https://migrants-refugees.va/20-action-points/>

At the same time, the Holy See has formally submitted the *20 Action Points for the Global Compacts* to the United Nations and the Member States as its input for the intergovernmental consultations and negotiations towards the Global Compacts. Accordingly, the document has been officially posted in the six United Nations languages.¹⁴

Towards the end of 2017, two important meetings served to pool the results of the year's consultations, assess what had been learned, and look forward to the work of developing the two Compacts in the course of the year ahead. These were the preparatory, stocktaking meeting of the GCM at Puerto Vallarta, Mexico (4-6.12.2017) and the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges at the Palais des Nations, Geneva (12.12.2017). Both conferences opened with the video-message of the Holy Father which we saw earlier, and both meetings were quite encouraging. They seemed to manifest the process of learning which had taken place and embody some of the qualities which one could hope to see in the future Compacts themselves.

IV. The Section offers global, regional and local support

Over the past 18 months, the Permanent Missions in Geneva and New York have represented the Holy See in the consultations and negotiations respectively towards the Global Compacts. In some sessions, the M&R Section formed part of the Holy See Delegation and also contributed to eight Side Events which explored important facets of the Church's position and practice regarding refugees and vulnerable migrants.¹⁵

At the regional level, the M&R Section has participated in meetings with intergovernmental bodies like the African Union and the European Union, and these proved to be privileged opportunities to share the Catholic Church's proposals and to acknowledge the shared concerns of the leadership in the respective Unions. Very useful meetings also took place with regional Bishops' Conferences¹⁶ and with regional groups of national bishops' conferences in South America and in East and Southeast Asia. Special mention should be made of cross-border meetings of bishops (Texas-Mexico, Haiti-Dominican Republic) where international dialogue and cross-border cooperation are producing much fruit on behalf of vulnerable people on the move.

Many helpful encounters have also taken place at the country level with both the

¹⁴ <http://www.undocs.org/a/72/528>

¹⁵ Responsibility and Solution Sharing, N.Y. 19.09.16; Unaccompanied Children, Geneva 15.3.2017; Right to Remain, N.Y. 22.05.17; Human Trafficking, N.Y. 25.9.17; Integrating Migrants, Geneva 30.11.17; Child Detention, N.Y. 21.2.18; Interfaith Perspective, N.Y. 3.05.18; Faith-Based Organizations, N.Y. 4.06.18.

¹⁶ The Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), the Council of Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE), and the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU (COMECE).

national government and the Bishops' Conference;¹⁷ at special meetings only with the Bishops' Conference or its Migration Commission;¹⁸ and during regularly-scheduled visits to Rome of about 30 Bishops' Conferences from 5 continents.

Finally, the Section's work of support is also carried out in an electronic way through the website¹⁹ and through daily postings on various social media²⁰ to communicate the good news of human mobility, to highlight success stories of solidarity, and to help change the distorted and destructive narrative surrounding asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants.

V. Conclusion: Results and Prospects

Nearly two years have passed since the historic New York Summit and Declaration and since the Holy Father launched the M&R Section. Pope Francis repeatedly called on governmental leaders and other policy-makers to replace the logic of the globalization of indifference with the globalization of solidarity with particular concern for the more needy and vulnerable members of the human family. This attests to the priority that he gives to this work since the first days from his election.

Evidence of the commitment may be found in the drafts on which the GCR process is consulting in Geneva and the GCM process is negotiating in New York. Many different National Representatives have expressed appreciation for the leadership of the Holy Father and the very active and helpful participation of the Holy See teams in Geneva and in New York.

Without waiting for the Global Compacts to be concluded, some countries have launched initiatives along lines suggested in the *20 Action Points*. For example, new programmes establish humanitarian corridors or sponsorship programmes, provide special channels of regularization for newly-arrived migrants, facilitate procedures for the validation of educational and professional qualifications obtained abroad, and reduce or eliminate the use of child detention for migratory offenses.

The Holy See insists on the importance of keeping a holistic and integrated approach, based on the centrality of the human person. There are still gaps in this sense in both draft texts, and on these the Holy See is working together with other countries.

Looking forward to the adoption of the non-binding yet normative Global Compacts in a few months' time, they will hopefully help States and all stakeholders to better

¹⁷ Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Germany and Paraguay

¹⁸ Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Ireland Italy, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Philippines and United States of America.

¹⁹ www.migrants-refugees.va

²⁰ Facebook (facebook.com/MandRSection), Instagram (m_rsection), LinkedIn (linkedin.com/company/migrants-&-refugees-section), Share-to-Care, Twitter (in five languages), YouTube.

meet the claims of asylum seekers and make international migration safer, more orderly and regular.²¹ The two Compacts should be “shared agreements at a global level [to] provide a framework for policy proposals and practical measures”, so that countries of origin, transit, arrival and return might collaborate for the benefit of those forced to move and of local residents too. We pray that the numerous recent and ongoing tragedies may be resolved and further tragedies avoided. Finally, may toxic discourse diminish and disappear, to be replaced by the culture of encounter and the mutual recognition of one another’s richness. Accordingly, the Holy Father both affirms and wishes that the Global Compacts “need to be inspired by compassion, foresight and courage”.²²

Thank you.

²¹ Cf. *New York Declaration*.

²² Pope Francis, *Message for the World Day of Peace*, 1.01.2018.