



Statement of Father Michael Czerny, S.J.,  
Undersecretary of the Migrant and Refugee Section  
Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development  
Holy See

Fifth Informal Thematic Session  
on the Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration

*Smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and contemporary forms of slavery,  
including appropriate identification, protection and assistance to migrants and trafficking  
victims*

My Delegation wishes to welcome the two Co-facilitators and the Special Representative for International Migration and to thank the panellists for their thoughtful presentations.

In the preparation of the Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, the Holy See very much welcomes the deep consideration of issues like trafficking and contemporary slavery which cause so much suffering for an ever increasing number of hapless victims in every part of the world. Today's complex migration scenario is sadly characterized by "new forms of slavery imposed by criminal organizations, which buy and sell men, women and children."<sup>1</sup>

Despite the great achievements of international agreements, asylum seekers and migrants, who risk their lives in search of safety and a new home, are still and ever more vulnerable, especially to criminal organizations.

The migration process usually begins with high hopes and expectations for greater security and better opportunities. Since safe, regular and affordable routes are generally not available, many migrants employ smugglers. Elements of human trafficking are present in much of contemporary human smuggling, and this is one reason why the migration project can go disastrously wrong. Traffickers can easily take advantage of the desperation of migrants and asylum seekers. Ending up in an irregular or undocumented status, they are at a very high risk of abuse and exploitation, including trafficking and enslavement. Therefore, the Holy See stresses the importance of ensuring adequate legal frameworks and reliable pathways to prevent migrants from becoming victims of human trafficking.

Factors contributing to vulnerability, like poverty, statelessness, joblessness, lack of education, discrimination of women and girls, do not in and of themselves necessarily lead to trafficking. Rather, it is the interplay of factors, mutually reinforcing each other, that increases vulnerability. At the same time, each society needs to recognize the forces of

---

<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Message* for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2016, 12 September 2015.

demand -- for example, for prostitution, or for labour below the minimum national standards -- that are at work domestically to make human trafficking very profitable.

The numbers of smuggled and trafficked migrants keep on increasing alarmingly.<sup>2</sup> According to the 2016 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 51 percent of the victims are women, 21 percent are men, 20 percent girls and 8 percent boys.

Human trafficking is a multi-billion dollar industry, among the world's largest, with an estimated 21 to 46 million people, victims of forced labour, debt-bondage, sex and other forms of trafficking. Slavery must not be an unavoidable aspect of economies. Instead, business should be in the vanguard in combating and preventing this travesty.<sup>3</sup>

Investigations have to be coordinated at national, regional and international levels. Data and key information sharing must be assured as well as legal protection for victims, while perpetrators are prosecuted and brought to justice. To protect human dignity, the training of public officers and establishing national policies to guarantee foreigners access to justice to are very important.

Assistance to victims must be guaranteed in receiving countries, and the principle of "non-refoulement" has to be applied to victims of trafficking, assuring them psychological counselling and other support and rehabilitation. Victims should be allowed to stay regularly in the country as long as they need healing therapy and eventually have their stay extended with the opportunity to work.

"We ought to recognize that we are facing a global phenomenon which exceeds the competence of any one community or country. In order to eliminate it, we need a mobilization comparable in size to that of the phenomenon itself."<sup>4</sup> Therefore the contributions of political bodies, business, academia, civil society and communities of faith are all indispensable, each according to their own capacities and responsibilities.

A measure of the GCM's success will be if tomorrow's migratory movements are no longer inevitably marked by human smuggling as today's clearly are. For irregular migration is not freely chosen but rather forced on people because legal and secure channels are simply not accessible.

The Holy See looks forward to participating in the high-level meeting to review the progress made on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to

---

<sup>2</sup> E.g., UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, 2016. "Measuring the total volume of trafficking in persons is not an easy task as any assessment of this crime needs to account for the coexistence of its three defining elements, the act, the means and the purpose" (p. 30). "A total of more than 570 different trafficking flows could be discerned from this data. This is a marked increase from previous editions of the *Global Report*, where 460 flows were detected for the period 2007-2010, and 510 for the period 2010-2012" (pp. 39-40).

<sup>3</sup> The literature reveals that the current de facto response of most businesses focuses on monitoring supply chains for forced labour. While material, these measures do not address sufficiently the wider socio-economic and cultural factors that engender trafficking. They fall short of the promise of business to engage as a strong and positive influence on society as posited by the SDGs.

<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, *Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2015.

Combat Trafficking in Persons, 27-28 September in New York, where it will reiterate its strong commitments.

Thank you.