



Statement by Reverend Father Michael Czerny,
Undersecretary of the Migrant and Refugee Section of the Holy See
4th Thematic Discussion towards a Global Compact on Refugees
Panel 3: *“How can we expand access to complementary pathways for admission?”*
Geneva, 14 November 2017

Mr. Moderator,

My Delegation wishes to express its disquiet at the fact that existing rights of refugees, already enshrined in international law, are no longer being honored on the grounds of security concerns. In fact, the adoption of more rigid policies related to their acceptance is exerting a dangerous impact on the safety of refugees and inevitably makes them more vulnerable to increased smuggling, human trafficking, and other forms of modern-day slavery.

In such disconcerting circumstances, international cooperation and solidarity are sorely needed, together with an increased commitment to responsibility and solution-sharing and the adoption of more generous resettlement policies.

The securing of borders and the wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers should not be considered mutually exclusive priorities but rather mutually reinforcing¹ and, indeed, beneficial. Defending the inalienable rights of refugees, “ensuring their fundamental freedoms and respecting their dignity are duties from which no one can be exempted. Protecting these brothers and sisters is a moral imperative which translates into adopting juridical instruments, both international and national, that must be clear and relevant.”²

Mr. Moderator,

Welcoming refugees can even contribute to the integral human development of the host population when such refugees are allowed to become agents of development and not merely recipients of aid or unwelcome guests tolerated for a short period of time. My Delegation wishes to highlight some concrete measures to expand the number and range of alternative legal pathways for safe, voluntary resettlement, in full respect with the principle of non-refoulement:³

1. More widespread implementation of private and community sponsorship programs;
2. Opening of humanitarian corridors and granting of special temporary visas for particularly vulnerable refugees fleeing conflicts in neighboring countries. The experience of the humanitarian corridors from Lebanon to Italy for Syrian refugees, and now from Ethiopia to Italy for Eritreans, South Sudanese and Somalis, sponsored by the Community of

¹ Statement of the Holy See at the 68th Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Program, Geneva, 3 October 2017.

² Address of Pope Francis to the International Forum on Migration and Peace, 21 February 2017

³ Twenty Action Points: Responding to Migrants and Refugees

Sant'Egidio, the Federation of Evangelical Churches and the Waldensian Round Table, are pilot projects which show that this alternative is possible and feasible. However, it should be the responsibility of States to develop such corridors, in much larger numbers, as an effective complementary pathway for admission;

3. An alternative to the issuing of humanitarian visas could be the lifting of visa requirements especially in cases where large numbers of persons must flee a particular State in search of protection. Lifting visa requirements would allow persons seeking protection to travel safely and spend their money on ordinary means of transport rather than paying smugglers;
4. Increasing the overall number of resettlements is an important tool of protection;
5. Adopting national policies which permit those forced to flee armed conflict, persecution or widespread violence in their countries of origin to be received immediately, even if temporarily, by neighboring States through the granting of temporary protection status;
6. Promoting greater respect for the unity of the family, the natural and fundamental unit of society, upon which refugees greatly depend, by expanding family reunification visas. This is of particular importance for unaccompanied refugee children.

Mr. Moderator,

When international cooperation and generosity is failing, we are left with a tragic result: warehousing millions of people in camps, for protracted periods in subhuman conditions, prey to violence and abuse, without a future and without the possibility of contributing their creativity. Camps and other makeshift measures must remain what they were intended to be: temporary solutions in a time of emergency that should make way as soon as possible to the promotion, adoption and firm implementation of durable solutions that contribute to the wellbeing of both host communities and those to whom they offer protection, promotion, and integration.

I thank you, Mr. Moderator.