



**World Conference on Xenophobia, Racism, and Populist Nationalism
in the Context of Global Migration**
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RESPONDING TO REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS. TWENTY ACTION POINTS

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Allow me to start by thanking the organizers of this conference for inviting the Migrants & Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development to contribute to the discussion on xenophobia, racism and populist nationalism in the context of global migration.

Today's event offers me the pleasant opportunity to explain the reasons for the Holy See's commitment to the success of the processes that will lead to the adoption of the two Global Compacts - one on refugees and one for safe, orderly and regular migration - before the end of this year.

Under the direct guidance of Pope Francis, the Migrants & Refugees Section drafted the document titled *20 Action Points for the Global Compacts*, which was handed over to the persons in charge of the two processes for the United Nations in September 2017. The *20 Action Points* advocate effective and proven measures which together constitute an integral response to the current migration challenges. In accordance with Pope Francis's teaching, the points are grouped under four headings: to welcome, to protect, to promote, and to integrate. Each is an active verb and a call to action. Starting from what is currently possible, their ultimate goal is the building of an inclusive and sustainable common home for all.

Looking at the present scenario, *welcoming* means offering broader options for migrants and refugees to enter destination countries safely and legally. As Pope Francis stated in his Message for the 2018 World Day for Migrants and Refugees, "This calls for a concrete commitment to increase and simplify the process for granting humanitarian visas and for reunifying families." Enhancing legal migration channels translates into adopting private and community sponsorship programmes and creating humanitarian corridors for vulnerable refugees. A real welcome offers migrants and refugees adequate and dignified initial accommodation, preferring the distribution of small groups in different localities instead of massive concentration of

people in a few centers. Consistent with the principle of the centrality of the human person, states are urged to balance personal and national security and adequately train law enforcement agents at the borders accordingly. They are also encouraged to adopt alternative solutions to detention for authorized migrants, particularly children.

The second verb, *to protect*, refers to the actions needed to protect migrants and refugees from the violence, abuse, and exploitation that they often fall victim to, because of their extreme vulnerability. Such protection must rely on adequate national and international juridical tools, to safeguard the migrants' and refugees' fundamental rights, independently from their formal status. In receiving countries, migrants and refugees should be granted freedom of movement and access to the labour market and means of communication. In case of repatriation, it is crucial to promote social and labour reintegration schemes and the portability of pension contributions. Special care is needed to protect migrant and refugee minors, who are to be granted regular access to primary and secondary education. For unaccompanied minors, or those separated from their families, temporary guardianship or foster care schemes should be implemented.

The verb *to promote* summarizes all the actions that have as their main goal the integral human development of migrants and refugees, as well as that of the communities that welcome them. All the dimensions of human existence are to be deemed essential: work and professional activity, education, social relationships, religion and family life. The communities of origin of migrants and refugees cannot be excluded from this commitment: they should create alternatives to migration for those whose lives have been destabilized. The development of international cooperation programmes, free of vested interests, should be promoted in order to that help migrants and those welcoming them to achieve self-fulfilment. Coordination and collaboration programmes among States, if well structured and free of secondary purposes, may be instrumental in improving the local situation. As migrants and refugees are directly concerned, they should be included and participate in every decision-making process.

The verb *to integrate* refers to reciprocal processes involving both migrants and local communities in an enriching cultural exchange. Locals are to be prepared to contribute to the process through specific programmes that foster significant encounters with others. Newcomers should always be open to learn and value the culture and traditions of the receiving country. Best practises of intercultural exchange should be documented and disseminated. Since the prospect of a long-term and permanent stay can favor integration, long-term migrant residents should be offered simplified procedures for regularization and naturalization.

It was deemed appropriate to prepare a single document for the two Global Compacts for two reasons: migration is increasingly composed of mixed flows; and

migrants and refugees, before being such, are persons inherently possessed of fundamental human rights and inalienable dignity. Furthermore, this decision underlines the importance of harmonizing the two Global Pacts as much as possible, so as to respond more adequately to the challenges of a very complex global migration scenario.

The document's practical considerations are based on the experience of local Churches and Catholic organizations at the grassroots level. These best practices are already in place and can be easily replicated in other locations.

After a long process of consultations and negotiations, the final draft of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was released on 11 July 2018. It is gratifying for the Migrants and Refugees Section to note that many guiding principles, objectives and commitments stated in the draft are consistent with the Holy See's recommendations. The Section agrees wholeheartedly with this enthusiastic assessment by Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations in New York: "This first-ever comprehensive framework on migration will serve as the international reference point for best practices and international cooperation in the global management of migration, not only for Governments, but also for non-governmental entities among which are the faith-based organizations, who are truly the hands and feet on the ground to assist migrants in difficulty."¹

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration constitutes a favourable and timely opportunity to initiate an open and sincere dialogue among government leaders, "a dialogue that takes into account people's actual experiences, sufferings and aspirations, in order to remind everyone once more of his or her responsibilities" aiming at setting "free those who today are oppressed, rejected and enslaved."²

The Migrant & Refugee Section is looking forward to the adoption of the Global Compacts, but it is also looking beyond the Compacts. Together with its partners, the Section is committed to ensuring that, "as a sign of shared global responsibility, concrete engagement follows from the words that will be codified in the aforementioned two agreements."³ As we all know, the Compacts can only provide a suitable framework for a better understanding of the complex phenomenon of migration in its multiple facets and for formulating effective responses to its different challenges. The real action will be up to the individual States in necessary collaboration with other stakeholders. As Pope Francis said in February 2017, to

¹ Bernardito Auza, *Statement on the Concluding session of the intergovernmental negotiations on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*, 13 July 2018.

² Pope Francis, *Address to the Members of the Plenary Council of the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)*, 8 March 2018.

³ *Ibidem*.

welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrants and refugees requires “the efforts of all actors, among which, you may be assured will always be the Church.”⁴

Now it’s time for action. The Migrants & Refugees Section is committed to urging the Bishops’ Conferences all over the world to explain the Compacts and the *20 Action Points* to their parishes and Church organizations, with the hope of fostering more effective solidarity with migrants and refugees. Moreover the Section encourages all Bishops’ Conferences to engage in constructive dialogue with their Governments in order to help translate the Global Compacts into policies and programmes.

Many religious congregations and Catholic organizations have joined the Bishops Conferences in the dissemination and promotion of the *20 Action Points* at the national and local levels. Their valuable engagement would also be instrumental for the development and launching of new programmes, in cooperation with all the other stakeholders, within the framework the Global Compacts.

Since the beginning of its engagement with the Global Compacts, the Migrants and Refugees Section has been receiving concrete signs of support from many Christians around the world who declare that they are inspired by Pope Francis. At a more institutional level, the Section, invited by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, has engaged in a fruitful dialogue with the World Council of Churches.

At the interreligious level, the Section also acknowledges the expressions of commendation and support received from several religious leaders and faith-based organizations in the past months. They provide substantial evidence of a shared commitment towards governance of migration that is deeply grounded in the humanistic principles which are pillars of contemporary civilizations.

I would like to conclude by quoting the homily that Pope Francis delivered on the fifth anniversary of his visit to Lampedusa: “Before the challenges of contemporary movements of migration, the only reasonable response is one of solidarity and mercy. A response less concerned with calculations, than with the need for an equitable distribution of responsibilities, an honest and sincere assessment of the alternatives and a prudent management. A just policy is one at the service of the person, of every person involved; a policy that provides for solutions that can ensure security, respect for the rights and dignity of all; a policy concerned for the good of one’s own country, while taking into account that of others in an ever more interconnected world.”⁵

⁴ Pope Francis, Address to the Participants of the International Forum on “Migration and Peace”, 21 February 2017.

⁵ Pope Francis, *Homily during the Holy Mass for Migrants, Saint Peter’s Basilica*, 6 July 2018.