



**THE HOLY SEE**  
**2012 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
*Working Session 3: Humanitarian issues and other commitments*  
*Migrant workers, the integration of legal migrants*  
**Tuesday, September 25, 2012**

Mister Chairperson,

1. In his Message for the 98<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2012), Pope Benedict XVI said that “internal or international migration, in fact, as an opening in search of better living conditions or to flee from the threat of persecution, war, violence, hunger or natural disasters, has led to an unprecedented mingling of individuals and peoples, with new problems not only from the human standpoint but also from ethical, religious and spiritual ones. The current and obvious consequences of secularization, the emergence of new sectarian movements, widespread insensitivity to the Christian faith and a marked tendency to fragmentation are obstacles to focusing on a unifying reference that would encourage the formation of one family of brothers and sisters in societies that are becoming ever more multiethnic and intercultural, where also people of various religions are urged to take part in dialogue, so that a serene and fruitful coexistence with respect for legitimate differences may be found.”

2. In this context, asylum seekers, who fled from persecution, violence and situations that put their life at risk, stand in need of understanding and welcome, of respect for their human dignity and rights, as well as awareness of their duties. Their suffering pleads with individual states and the international community to adopt attitudes of reciprocal acceptance, overcoming fears and avoiding forms of discrimination, and to make provisions for concrete solidarity also through appropriate structures for hospitality and resettlement programmes. All this entails mutual help between the suffering regions and those which, already for years, have accepted a large number of fleeing people, as well as a greater sharing of responsibilities among States.

3. The Holy See recognizes the right of States to control their borders and the entry of persons in their territory – to guarantee security, basic human rights and freedoms – considering it in line with the protection of the common good. This, however, should not come in conflict with the right of migrants to be treated always with the respect due to every human person. Severe immigration laws and restrictive immigration policies, including a limit to migrants’ access to social services, have not discouraged international migration. Rather, they have actually helped increase irregular migration and the considerable risk it involves. Migrants who finally manage

to enter another country irregularly may find that, instead of the honest and well-paying job promised to them, they could end up exploited in prostitution, indentured labor, slave-like services or even the extraction of organs. Unwittingly, they may have become victims of trafficking in human beings. Migrants in an irregular situation are vulnerable. Although they conserve their human dignity and rights, these are not guaranteed by law. Protecting the rights of irregular migrants, therefore, would be an important step forward in stopping migrant abuse and exploitation.

An important characteristic of contemporary migration is the increasing proportion of women involved in it. In many parts of the world, women's rights need to be defended. Thus those of a migrant woman have to be safeguarded twice.

Furthermore, the right to migrate includes the right to emigrate as a family, as well the right to remain with one's family. Family separation brings about problems for the stability of the couple and of the family itself, as well as for the education of the children.

Mr. Chairperson,

**4.** The commitment of the Catholic Church in favour of migrants is pursued at various levels, where Christian communities pay special attention to migrant workers and their families by accompanying them with prayer, solidarity and charity, by enhancing what is reciprocally enriching, as well as by fostering new political, economic and social planning that promotes respect for the dignity of every human person, the safeguarding of the family, access to dignified housing, to work and to welfare. The numerous educational institutions of the Catholic Church are also deeply engaged in this field. The Holy See works actively together with governmental institutions or volunteers at national and international levels that offer their resources and expertises to care for migrants. The Catholic Church keeps offering her contribution in the complex and vast phenomenon of human mobility, by willingly valuing migrants, within the ecclesial community and society, as an important element for mutual enrichment and the construction of the human family, in a fruitful intercultural exchange of gifts.

Thank you, Mister Chairperson.