



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, Permanent Representative
of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations
in Geneva

at the 100th Session of the Council of the International Organization for
Migration (IOM)

Geneva, 5-7 December 2011

Mr President,

Allow me to express a word of appreciation for the decision, just taken, to admit the Holy See as a Member of the IOM. Around the globe, the movement of people who are looking for work or survival from famine, conflicts and the violation of their basic human rights continues to increase. Thus, the responsibility of the international community to respond in an effective and humane way becomes more evident and more urgent. As it marks its 60th Anniversary, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) can celebrate a record of great service to displaced people and of collaboration with States and with civil society organizations in finding realistic solutions without compromising on basic principles of protection and respect for human rights. Through its membership in the Organization the Holy See intends to support this tradition in accord with its specific nature, principles and norms. In particular, I would like to highlight three points:

1. Rather than decreasing their numbers the present economic crisis further complicates the life of uprooted people, and it raises a challenging question of how to provide security, not just to States, but also to migrants. From the perspective of this Delegation, the ethical implications of the current situation seem to require a renewed discussion on how to prevent the deaths and respond to the staggering trauma of people attempting to escape from their countries across the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the desert of Arizona, or transit countries like Egypt and the Sinai peninsula or Indonesia toward Australia, and the list goes on. Today the ethical dimension of population movements should take its place along other major concerns such as their effect on development, on national identity, on the evolution of democracy. When the dignity of the human person and the right to life are at stake, these values should take

priority. In this difficult area of reflection and of balancing of rights, this Delegation will try to contribute its part.

2. The experience of Catholic agencies and associations in Geneva and on the ground worldwide, for example of the International Catholic Migration Commission and the many national Caritas organizations, is well established and extensive. By providing assistance to displaced people in camps and urban settings, by coordinating resettlement operations, and by devising integration programs, these agencies and associations have gained invaluable experience and delivered effective service that has enabled thousands of families and individuals to start a new life and to become constructive partners in the host societies. For this reason, operational collaboration appears an important and even necessary way to facilitate the convergence of all available energies in order to help uprooted people of all kinds through joint or delegated programs and through regular sharing of information.
3. A third observation regards the distinct features of the services provided by Catholic agencies and associations around the world. This response is dictated by the needs of the person without distinction of race, colour, religious belief or lack of it, and it embraces everyone in a truly comprehensive manner. In fact, the deep conviction that prompts involvement and action in helping all uprooted people is based in the belief of the unique dignity and common belonging to the same human family of every human person, that is antecedent to any cultural, religious, social, political or other consideration. This disinterested service values the accompaniment of uprooted persons and combines professional care with generous love and results in greater efficiency and long term benefits. Thus it seems only right that public authorities acknowledge this contribution and, in a genuine sense of democracy, make room for conscience-based service that, in turn, becomes a guarantee of freedom for everyone.

In conclusion, Mr. President, the participation of the Holy See as a Member of the IOM is a commitment to collaboration and support in the common search of solutions and assistance to people caught up in this major phenomenon of our globalized world and in need of a friendly hand to make them protagonists of their future and active partners in their adoptive societies and in the world.