



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič,  
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and  
Other International Organizations in Geneva at the

**International Dialogue on Migration**

**Panel 1: “Understanding migrant vulnerability: concepts, drivers, protection frameworks and gaps”**

*Geneva, 18 July 2017*

Mr. Chair,

Migration has become one of the most powerful forces shaping our social, political, economic and cultural life, with implications nearly everywhere in the world.

In addressing the vulnerabilities of migrants, the Holy See wishes to reiterate the importance of developing and implementing a holistic and integrated approach firmly centered on the human person and his/her dignity. Such an approach remains, indeed, the best way to detect and overcome harmful stereotypes, to avoid stigmatizing anyone in response to certain personal or social characteristics. Indeed, when assessing the needs of migrants, it is important to take into account all aspects of the person and not simply one or other characteristic.

My delegation believes that vulnerability results from a wide range of discriminatory attitudes and practices, as is well expressed in the background paper. Vulnerability, as "the diminished capacity of an individual or group to resist, cope with, or recover from" situations of abuse of their rights, would mean that such a definition implies that the condition of vulnerability is necessarily provoked by some external circumstances, conditions or factors that are independent of personal attitudes or behavior of persons and groups. In this sense, the Holy See expresses its concern about references in the background paper to situations of vulnerability considered as such on the basis of sexual behavior rather than of discriminatory attitudes. This narrower focus may result in denying or ignoring the centrality of the whole person as such, while recreating "categories" which would engender protection gaps that are to be avoided, as claimed in the background paper.

This approach also should consider all components of the migratory journey, including the distinct causes that prompt our brothers and sisters to flee their lands and the consequent need to respond accordingly, and all stages of that journey, including countries of origin, transit, destination, and, when possible and feasible, of voluntary return.

In this regard, Pope Francis repeatedly stressed the moral imperative to protect migrant workers, particularly “men and women in irregular situations” as well as those “exiled and seeking asylum” or “victims of trafficking”<sup>1</sup>; “...defending their inalienable

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, Address to participants in the International Forum for Migration and Peace, Vatican City, 21 February 2017.

rights, ensuring their fundamental freedoms and respecting their dignity are duties from which no one can be exempted.”<sup>2</sup>

While recalling that a comprehensive solution to the vulnerabilities of migrants would need to target simultaneously the structural roots of migration such as injustices, including poverty and inequalities, labor exploitation and unemployment, racism, persecutions, war and climate change, it must be acknowledged that these very vulnerabilities are often a direct consequence of the lack of implementation of protection instruments and disrespect for the inherent dignity of the human person and his or her inalienable rights.

Mr. Chair,

As we address the vulnerable situations in which migrants find themselves, the Delegation of the Holy See wishes to bring our attention to a reality which is often overlooked in migration discussions, that is, the intimate relationship between a migrant and his or her family. Regrettably, too often migration brings about a double vulnerability: first, for the migrant, but at the same time for his or her family.

While migrants bring their positive contribution to their host societies, they too often are compelled to leave behind family members. As we all know, the decision to migrate, to abandon one’s native lands, is by far one of the most difficult choices in life. If on the one hand, remittances are important to improve the situation “at home”, they do not quite compensate for other human needs such as affection, nurturing, and caregiving.

In this regard, the Holy See wishes to reiterate that in shaping the Global Compact on Migration, the family dimension needs to be taken into account, thus making migration a more positive experience for everyone: in fact, the family truly is the foundation upon which stable social cultural and economic situations can flourish<sup>3</sup> and is central in achieving SDG 16 to establishing peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.<sup>4</sup>

As we move forward in the concerted efforts to frame a sound Global Compact on Migration, the Holy See considers it of the utmost importance to muster the political will to bridge the “implementation gap” of the protection instruments already developed and to make them the foundation of truly humane and comprehensive policies. Rather than simply listing existing rights or commitments, we must pull the extra effort to strengthen their implementation through concrete cooperation mechanisms that bring these relevant rights and principles to life.

In this regard, a sort of voluntary “review mechanism” for the Global Compact on Migration implementation could serve as an instrument to see where the international community stands vis-a-vis its commitments towards migrants. These measures are not particular concessions to migrants, but are, in fact, in the interests of the international community at large. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. “Charter of the Rights of the Family”, presented by the Holy See to all persons, institutions and authorities concerned with the mission of the family in today’s world October 22, 1983

<sup>4</sup> SDG 16: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”