



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 of the International Organization for Migration

Panel 2: “Understanding the linkages between migration, environment and climate change (MECC) and migration health in the context of Covid-19 and promoting the inclusion of MECC dimensions in COVID-19 recovery efforts.”

Geneva, 26 May 2021

Mr. Chair,

The dramatic lessons from the ongoing pandemic shed a new light on the interdependence of the human family and, in particular, on the need to consider health as a primary common good.

In this regard, as there remains an alarming and expanding inequality in the global distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, Pope Francis affirmed that “we cannot allow the various forms of nationalism closed in on themselves to prevent us from living as the truly human family that we are”¹. For this reason, he has appealed for vaccines to be made available and affordable to everyone and to facilitate distribution especially in the poorest countries.

Indeed, justice, solidarity and inclusiveness are the main criteria to be followed in order to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic. In this regard, this Delegation wishes to underline that the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration calls on States to “incorporate the health needs of migrants in national and local health care policies and plans.” Indeed, the Global Compact on Refugees, calls on “States and relevant stakeholders ... [to] contribute resources and expertise to expand and enhance the quality of national health systems to facilitate access by refugees and host communities.”

Mr. Chair,

All too often “migrants are not seen as entitled like others to participate in the life of society, and it is forgotten that they possess the same intrinsic dignity as any person”². It is regrettable that, amidst the pandemic, many migrants have become even more vulnerable than they were previously. Even more concerning, those who find themselves in irregular situations, out of fear of being detained or deported, often hesitate to seek medical care.

Rather than being a privilege, healthcare should be accessible and affordable to all, including those in vulnerable situations. Access to healthcare should never be instrumentalized politically or ideologically. It should be regulated through non-discriminatory, comprehensive laws, policies and practices firmly rooted in the inherent dignity of human life at every stage, that is, from its beginning, through its development and up to its natural end.

Mr. Chair,

If there is no doubt that climate change is a reality that is increasingly contributing to the decisions of millions of people to forsake their home and face the perils of displacement, then there should also be little doubt over the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on health.

As Pope Francis has said, the world will emerge either better or worse after the pandemic. What is certain is that migration – whatever its triggering factors - will be playing an ever-increasing role in our societies. Therefore, mindful of the dramatic lessons learned from the pandemic, it is now the time to rethink the parameters of human coexistence through the lenses of human fraternity and solidarity.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

¹ Pope Francis, Urbi et Orbi Message, 25 December 2020.

² Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter “Fratelli Tutti”, par. 39.