



**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  
First Thematic Consultation on the Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration  
Panel 1: “Human Rights of all Migrants”  
Geneva, 8 May 2017**

Mr. Chairman,

The Holy See Delegation wishes to thank the two co-facilitators for their initial remarks and the panelists for their presentations during this first panel of the first thematic consultation on the Global Compact on Migration.

Through the New York Declaration, Heads of States and Governments and High Representatives committed “to protect the safety, dignity, and human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, regardless of their migratory status, at all times”.<sup>1</sup> Now, the consultations on the Global Compact on Migration present the international community with an unprecedented opportunity to shift from a “reactive” approach to a more predictable, coordinated, manageable, and thus effective response to the human reality and experience of migration within an holistic and integrated approach.

However, the only way we can be successful in improving the global governance of migration is by shaping a far-sighted and people-centered Global Compact which hinges on migrants as the active protagonists. The outcome of the negotiations on this Compact truly will serve as the litmus test of fraternity and solidarity among the family of nations over and above any political divisions or geographical borders.

In this regard, the Holy See wishes to launch a strong appeal to protect the dignity of every person and to implement, without reserve, humanitarian principles and policies in response to people on the move, especially those who are most vulnerable.

As Pope Francis recently stated: “Every migrant is a human person who, as such, possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance... irregular legal status cannot allow the migrant to lose his dignity, since he is endowed with inalienable rights, which can neither be violated nor ignored”<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, when handled with humanity, migration can contribute to the well-being of countries of origin and destination in a “win-win situation”.

The journeys of most migrants are by no means comfortable; most often they involve traumatic experiences that can only be sustained by hope and faith. People move at great personal

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<sup>1</sup> New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (19 September 2016), Para 41.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, *Address to participants in the 6<sup>th</sup> International Forum on Migration and Peace*, Vatican City, 21 February 2017.

costs, and frequently are exposed to exploitation, abuse and violence. Defending the inalienable rights of migrants, ensuring their fundamental freedoms, and respecting their dignity is not only a moral duty but also a shared ethical responsibility that must be translated into concrete and measurable actions.

Ensuring protection, however, is not enough. As long as dramatic situations of poverty, conflict, persecution, and widespread violence persist in countries of origin, the commercial interests of smugglers will continue to thrive, and the hopes of migrants will be violated, no matter how strong our commitments to protect the human rights of people on the move. *“What is required is the promotion of an integral human development of migrants which requires a multi-stakeholder approach: from the political community to civil society, from international organizations to religious institutions... The human promotion of migrants and their families begins with their communities of origin. That is where such promotion should be guaranteed, joined to the right of being able to emigrate, as well as the right to not be constrained to emigrate, namely the right to find in one’s own homeland the conditions necessary for living a dignified life.”*<sup>3</sup>

Of considerable concern for the Holy See is the condition of child migrants - which is worsened when they are unaccompanied or separated from their parents and other family members - since they are more exposed to various kinds of abuse and violence. Children on the move lack a voice and political and social influence in most receiving countries, so their needs are often forgotten or ignored. Mindful of the well acknowledged international standards regarding the right to education, we deem it necessary to reaffirm also the primary responsibility and the prior rights of parents in the education and upbringing of their children.

My Delegation would like to invite the panelists to share their views on *how to ensure that our commitments do not end up being just a comprehensive collection of existing rights and political commitments but are implemented both in spirit and in action through concrete and measurable outcomes in the Global Compact.*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*