

**Statement on the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD):
"Towards a Global Social Contract on Migration and Development"
Berlin, 28 June-1 July 2017**

Caritas Internationalis (CI) is a global confederation of 165 Catholic organizations working on humanitarian relief and international development. Operating in 200 countries and territories, one of Caritas' key objectives is to promote integral human development. Specifically, Caritas implements approaches that take the wellbeing of the person and persons into consideration so as to achieve a more just society.

Pope Francis has given us four key actions in response to "forced nature of many contemporary migratory movements": welcome, protect, promote, and integrate.¹ To that end we see a unique opportunity in the Global Compacts and the Sustainable Development Goals to follow through on the Holy Father's remarks. We want to see commitments by governments that put the security and dignity of persons first and not border security concerns; we want to see bridges across difference and not divisive walls; and we want governments to commit to the establishment of concrete and measurable indicators for the Global Compact on Migration.

We call upon governments and relevant stakeholders to act in solidarity to develop mechanisms to protect migrants and their rights, as well as to promote possibilities for migrants to contribute to the development of the communities where they stay. Drawing on experiences from our global network, Caritas Internationalis would like to emphasize four elements for a Global Compact that works:

1) Safety of People: Building bridges, not walls

- a. Legal channels for labour migration.** A Global Compact that works should be written in a spirit of putting the safety and rights of people first, of building bridges among countries and people. It should be providing legal channels for labour migration, also for migrants who are not highly skilled but needed (e.g. domestic workers, agricultural workers) in order to avoid exploitation and death along the journey. Travel bans are not the best answer as bans increase potential for trafficking, especially for those who are leaving their countries irregularly. States should establish bilateral agreements and discussions in favour of migrant worker protection instead of bans.
- b. Protecting trafficked persons and strengthening capacity to stop traffickers.** The current policies of migration deterrence make migrants vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking, smuggling, and eventually death. More channels for legal labour migration—not only for highly skilled people - would avoid persons resorting to smugglers and traffickers. It would also avoid that people searching for better opportunities or a job would use the asylum system in the absence of other legal channels. States need to adopt stronger identification mechanisms to be used by public service and border control officials, as well as clear protocols for private citizens witnessing trafficking.
- c. For victims and survivors of trafficking,** there must be better laws and social protection that de-criminalize the trafficked person, and instead provides adequate assistance for rehabilitation. States should provide permits for survivors of trafficking while attending hearings and provide special protection to avoid that survivors become victims of any acts of retaliation.
- d. Ensuring labour rights and safe and secure working environments for migrant workers.** In spite of some progress much needs to be done to develop a tool for data and implementation of holistic ethical practices. Examples of such practices are:
 - Pre-departure counselling and training on rights, including actions to take when rights are violated
 - Referral systems for migrants, especially women and survivors of abuse and/or trafficking
 - Hotlines, online platforms, and/or mobile applications in countries of transit and destination that allow for reporting independently of the legal status of the person
 - Creation/activation of migrant worker unions
 - Monitoring of activities of recruitment agencies
- e. Upholding the rights of the child.** Governments must treat minor migrants as children first and apply child protection laws to this vulnerable group rather than rules and systems intended for adults. The detention of minor migrants should be avoided to protect the best interests and healthy development of the child.

¹ Pope Francis. 2017. Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the International Forum on "Migration and Peace." Retrieved from http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/february/documents/papa-francesco_20170221_forum-migrazioni-pace.html

- 2) **The Right to Remain-** Migration should be a choice and not a necessity; people should be able to stay at home. States and stakeholders must acknowledge and effectively address the root causes of migration. There are many push and pull factors of migration such as climate change, natural or human-made disaster, war/conflict, poverty, food insecurity and/or hunger, and corruption. Such conditions may affect access to and availability of work, healthcare, education and other aspects of infrastructure. Policies in emigration countries should provide more opportunities and the creation of jobs. Civil Society, the private sector, and diaspora organizations can play an important role in this—applying the principle of solidarity. Development aid should not be conditional on taking citizens back, securing borders, or on preventing third country nationals to travel. It should be about providing more opportunities in home countries.
- 3) **The Right to Return:** Many migrants state that if the conditions in their home community improved they would be willing to return. Voluntary return should be the ideal option. However, no matter what the motivations for return are, ethical return and sustainable approaches should be at the centre the policies and processes.
- a. Ethical return.* Returning to a country of origin, and the timing of that return, should be a choice—not a “choice” under threat of forcible return, but an informed choice, such as any migration decision. Appropriate and sufficient services should be provided to those returning home both at the departure point and arrival point, where they should receive legal, social, and financial support. It is important to underline that the services should act as a bridge between both countries. Prior to return, States must be held responsible to investigate implications of return via a risk and security assessment. Such assessments should emphasize availability of social supports in addition to safety and security concerns. Furthermore, special attention must be paid to vulnerable populations such as children and women.
- Caritas believes that in order for a return to be successful and sustainable for the migrant and the receiving community, it should be individually tailored to the situation of the person(s) involved, coordinated both in the host community as well as in the receiving community, and accompanied with appropriate counselling and policies. This holistic approach provides returnees a real foundation upon which to rebuild their lives, and to support their communities.
- b. Supporting migrant entrepreneurship.* (Re-)integration policies play a key role in providing opportunities for migrants to experience a sustainable return and to contribute to their home communities. Migrants bring skills, different culture, new ideas and knowledge with them in their journeys. To ensure a sustainable living for migrants, as well as to protect migrants from exploitation, more funding and training needs to be available for migrants creating small businesses upon return. Policies should protect returning migrants as individuals and as business owners.
- c. Return during crisis.* States involved in repatriation programs or evacuation programs of foreign nationals caught in a crisis in their host state should adopt policies and procedures which facilitate and promote reintegration of returnees. Civil society and diaspora organizations can contribute and effectively complement actions of states in accompanying the voluntary return and reintegration process on both ends of the process.
- 4) **Governments should support and not criminalize those who help migrants-** The trend of trying to criminalize those who protect and accompany migrants (e.g. providing food, shelter, or rescue them during their journey) is growing more worrisome. Support at any stage of the journey is needed, as it upholds human dignity by providing protection against abuse, exploitation, and violence during the journey. These are the conditions created by restrictive policies of governments with complicity from state authorities in some cases. We call upon governments to support those who help migrants, as they show humanity and solidarity and help people to regain their dignity. “Solidarity is born precisely from the capacity to understand the needs of our brothers and sisters who are in difficulty and to take responsibility for these needs.”²

The Caritas delegation composed by delegates from Caritas Belgium, Costa Rica, Germany, Lebanon, Sweden and its international secretariat in Rome, joins civil society to address critical issues related to the safety and protection of migrants and their rights and to contribute to shaping the Global Compact on Migration so that it makes a real change in the life of migrants.

Vatican City, June 2017

² http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/february/documents/papa-francesco_20170221_forum-migrazioni-pace.html