

1 October 2020 - *Tour de table*

Mr./Madame Chair

Thank you for the floor, I am delighted to represent the Holy See today at the first Meeting of the Drafting Committee on Migrant Women. I'm currently serving the Migrants & Refugees Section, an action-oriented Vatican office personally guided by Pope Francis to ensure that migrants, especially those forced to flee, are not shut out or left behind.

The Catholic Church's commitment towards migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, victims of human trafficking and internally displaced persons has been summarized by Pope Francis in four verbs: to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate. They stand for the four pillars of a coordinated and effective action that responds to the challenges of contemporary migration. The Catholic Church intends to develop such an action in collaboration with all political and social stakeholders, in order to bring about global and long-sighted governance of migration flows that will benefit everyone.

The Holy See is pleased to offer its contribution to the important discussions of this Commission, a contribution grounded on the good practices implemented in this field by the Catholic Church around the world.

Mr./Madame Chair let me assure you that you can rely on the constructive spirit and support of the Holy See during this Commission.

Thank you, Mr./Madame Chair,

1 October 2020 - Discussion

(4 key aspects)

The official teaching of the Catholic Church recognizes the unique and irreplaceable role of women in the context of migration and the defense and preservation of their human dignity is one of its utmost priorities. The Holy See reiterates today the importance of the promotion of women, so that they may realize their full potential and truly contribute to the Common Good of society¹ and it hopes that the Commission will continue to work towards a Recommendation that is free from controversial terminology and language.

The Holy See would like to highlight a few key aspects of the constant concern and maternal care shown by the Catholic Church towards migrant and refugee women. Its commitment to them, which is translated into concrete initiatives and good practices daily, will be our main contribution to the discussion of this Commission.

1. *Vulnerability.* Sadly, abuses, exploitation and discrimination are, indeed, frequent features in the life of migrant and refugee women and girls in countries of origin, transit and destination. A reality exacerbated by the current pandemic, multiplying inequality, and increasing vulnerabilities exploited by traffickers.

2. *The role of women within the family.* The ever-increasing mass movements of persons seeking asylum and of refugees have created new situations of vulnerability and hardship, particularly for women and children. At the same time, migration also generates opportunities for improving the social condition of women and leads to positive economic changes at the individual level for both the family and the communities they belong to. Therefore, investing in women's integration is investing in family integration and in migrants' integration as well.

¹ <https://holyseemission.org/contents//statements/5d97b897e37aa.php>

3. *Human Trafficking and Smuggling*. Migrants' testimonies as well as frightening official statistics sadly confirm women and children representing the majority of the victims not only of violence and abuses, but also of smuggling, human trafficking and exploitation: an "atrocious scourge," an "aberrant plague" and an "open wound on the body of contemporary society."² From a Christian anthropological viewpoint, the sanctity of human life, from conception until natural death, and the inalienable dignity of each and every human being, constitute the starting point and the central focus of every initiative, including with migrants.

4. *Empowering migrant and refugee women*. In emergency situations - and far too often, after the emergency - detention camps become home to thousands of displaced people, asylum seekers and refugees. In these camps women are frequently abused, discriminated against and marginalized, with no chance to express their concerns or to participate in the decision-making process. The integration of migrant women should include the possibility for them to realize their full potential by playing an active role in their own development.³ Therefore, it is necessary "to assure the participation of refugee women in camp administration as a way of guaranteeing sufficient attention especially to problems affecting them and children."⁴

Thank you, Mr/Madame Chair,

² Pope Francis, *Address to Participants in the International Conference on Combating Human Trafficking*, 10 April 2014

³ Cf *Messaggio del Santo Padre Giovanni Paolo II per la Giornata mondiale dell'emigrazione*, 1995.

⁴ Cf *Welcoming Christ in refugees and forcibly displaced persons, Pastoral guidelines*, Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People and Pontifical Council Cor Unum, 2013