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Statement by Rev. Fr. Gabriele F. Bentoglio, Undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, at the 8 Global Forum on Migration and Development (Istanbul, 15 October 2015)

Here below the Statement by Rev. Fr. Gabriele F. Bentoglio, Undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, at the 8th Global Forum on Migration and Development (Istanbul, 15 October 2015):

Statement by Rev. Fr. Gabriele F. Bentoglio

Mr. Chairperson,

Distinguished panellists and participants,

The Holy See Delegation would like to express its gratitude to Turkey for its engagement and leadership in the challenging task of chairing the 8th Global Forum on Migration and Development.

Mr. Chairperson,

We currently find ourselves at a turning point. The recently adopted *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* is a clear sign that the international community has put in a remarkable effort to come together as a real family of nations, declaring its commitment to eradicate poverty. While successfully acknowledging “the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development,”¹ the Declaration, together with the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda*, also recognizes that “international migration is a multi-dimensional reality of major relevance for the development of countries of origin, transit and destination.”²

By endeavouring to “ensure safe, orderly, and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the human treatment of migrants regardless of migration status, of refugees and of displaced persons,”³ Agenda 2030 created a strong basis for action on migration and development. But this success came at a price: thousands of lives have been lost in recent years. In spite of these tragedies, the world – especially in developed

countries – has been consumed by divisive and scaremongering rhetoric about refugees and migrants, often mistakenly mixing up the two terms in media and public discourses. This has inevitably led to a disordered and inadequate response to migration.

Mr. Chairperson,

The key challenge ahead of us is to ensure a proper follow-up and review process in order to deliver on the commitments in Agenda 2030. In this regard, the Holy See wishes to make three points:

1. The increasing number of migrants is the tangible evidence of the unjust distribution of the earth's resources, which are meant to be equitably shared by all. Oftentimes, migrants move in the hope of ensuring their families a decent life, away from poverty, hunger, and exploitation. But a migratory journey is not a leisure trip: it is a leap of faith. Many migrants move at great personal cost, in the hope of building a new life. That is why it is paramount that the human rights of migrants, regardless of migration status, be fully respected. At the same time, there is a parallel need to assist the countries of origin of migrants and refugees. Globalization of solidarity, international cooperation, and the equitable distribution of the earth's goods will be essential to eliminate those inequalities that lead people to abandon their native lands and culture.

2. There is no successful and long-lasting migration strategy without a parallel and comprehensive integration policy hinging on the human person as the subject primarily responsible for development. Although the influx of migrants and refugees seriously challenges the various societies that accept them, the dignity of the human person always takes precedence over partisan interests and economic considerations. As Pope Francis recalled in his message for the 2016 World Day of Migrants and Refugees "at this moment in human history, marked by great movements of migration, identity is not a secondary issue. Those who migrate are forced to change some of their most distinctive characteristics and, whether they like or not, even those who welcome them are also forced to change."⁴ Migrants are not people to be feared. They are builders of bridges among cultures, bringing in hard work, energy and new ideas. While newcomers have a right to preserve their cultural identity, they, too, have responsibilities to respect the cultural heritage of the host country and search for the common good⁵. In light of the Agenda 2030 follow-up and review process, how can we ensure that migration and integration will become mutually enriching, opening up positive perspectives to communities, and preventing the danger of discrimination, racism, extreme nationalism or xenophobia?

3. All too often young and educated professionals, in particular women, force themselves to accept low-skilled work in developed countries in order to be able to migrate. In so doing, they neglect their talents and the efforts and resources invested in their education, only to make up for the lack of labour force in developed economies. Many others fall victims of unethical recruitment practices, trafficking or smuggling. What happens to these many young people is deeply distressing. More legal channels and opportunities benefitting both the host and origin country need to be created. This could be done by providing flexible temporary work exchange programmes or increasing the investment in scholarships for students to go to wealthier nations to acquire scientific knowledge or professional training. This would enable them effectively to serve the needs of their native land. In any case, the dignity of the human person always takes precedence.

Mr. Chairperson,

This is a defining moment for the evolution of the Global Forum on Migration and Development. True to its nature of a voluntary, informal, non-binding and government-led process, the Global Forum on Migration and Development could serve in this process as an efficient platform for sharing national experiences and lessons learned on implementing migration-related commitments in Agenda 2030, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development. Migration cannot be reduced to its political and legislative aspects or economic implications. "It is important to view migrants not only on the basis of their status as regular or irregular, but above all as people whose dignity is to be protected and who are capable of contributing to progress and the general welfare."⁶

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

1 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7891Transforming%20Our%20World.pdf>, Declaration, par. 29 (4 October 2015).

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 Message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, January 17, 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20150912_world-migrants-day-2016.html (4 October 2015).

5 Cfr. *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*

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