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Latin America – Asia

Understanding Population displacements: A plurality of views from the University

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Check against delivery

Mobility ‘slicing’ and fuller societal response

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Allow me a few words to express the pleasure this invitation has given me. There is first the concept of bringing various universities of Asia and Latin America together, which no doubt is a very enriching approach to exchange on a global phenomenon. Secondly because this is done from a specifically Catholic perspective, which proves that Church is continuously active on the many societal challenges. Thirdly, I truly felt that this invitation is an opportunity to learn from and contribute to the various academic analyses this colloquium intends to develop and lastly because it is an honour to be invited as the icebreaker and opening speaker of this colloquium. This being said I sincerely want to thank the organizers, the Santo Tomás University, the IFCU and especially Prof. Msgr. Thivierge for this opportunity to exchange with academics from Asia and Latin America, on one of the major challenges of our ever more globalized world.

In my introduction I intend to raise a fundamental question on the methodology used to approach the human mobility issue as it divides over the various groups and statuses including the forcibly displaced. I will then try to identify a basis to monitor and manage human mobility and subsequently identify a few tools that may serve in this process of building future and adequate responses.

I. Understanding displacements

The word ‘**displacement**’ generates images of populations forced to move from one place to another place, but it remains obvious that these movements are more than just about geographical displacements and that the movement itself is framed by two distinct components: in the first instance by the forces and reasons that have driven people away from home (many against their will) and for which there is a need for protection and assistance; and secondly, by the experience of arriving and integrating somewhere else. These two aspects of displacement—bookends if you will, point to complex emergencies and humanitarian issues on the one hand and on the other at global and local development levels, societal and economic challenges, legal statuses and the absence of such status, environmental causes and of course at the many gaps in existing frameworks (or where such frameworks exist, gaps in their implementation) to protect and improve the well-being of all populations. That is, ***displacement includes both the need for protection and the call for some support in the process of settling down, temporarily or for the rest of one’s life.***

Over and above the relevance to *the protection of displaced persons* of longstanding international law principles on the conduct of war and rescue at sea, a growing body of widely ratified international instruments has elaborated important rights to protection that arise in very specific circumstances of displacement, for example, for persons fleeing persecution or trapped in human trafficking. In most cases however, these rights to protection have been limited to those displaced across *international* borders. Only recently has the need for international protection of those *internally* displaced been taken into consideration at the international level. It was no longer felt tenable that only those people who had crossed borders could be considered in need of international protection whereas those experiencing similar or even exactly the same kind of persecutions or life-threatening situations but who had not crossed a border would remain categorically ignored in their need for such protection. Indeed, in the 1990's significant work was achieved by global actors to phrase and promote the acceptance of a comprehensive set of "guiding principles" to ensure protection of the internally displaced; this decade has seen extraordinary efforts to reposition the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and other UN, international and non-government organizations to better provide that protection, as well as a ground-breaking new convention on protection of internally displaced persons adopted last year by the African Union, though the question remains to see it implemented. UNHCR High Commissioner Antonio Guterres has advocated passionately on this progression and succeeded in formally adding at least the *conflict-related* internally displaced as "persons of concern" to UNHCR.

Though it has not been without its share of stumbles and shortfalls, *the same positive trend is not apparent in the second aspect inherent to displacement*: the societal components, which do not directly relate to the reasons for displacement but much more to the consequences of the displacement. These invite us to look at the phenomenon of dislocation from a much broader and essentially community perspective. Such a sociologic reading of the facts—call it simply human-oriented reading—calls for a much more holistic approach that considers many more factors related to and conditioning human existence and societal realities. Urban areas are a perfect illustration for this: not only have we witnessed a major shift in human mobility bringing for the first time in history nearly 50% of the global population to live in urban areas, but increasingly we see how truly *mixed* that mobility is: on the one hand, people with citizenship or some other regular legal status moving to cities from elsewhere in the country either voluntarily or having been compelled for any number of reasons, seeking safety, survival or economic opportunity, often rural-to-urban migrants; on the other hand, people also moving into cities from other countries, for much the same variety of reasons but with immigration statuses ranging from legal refugee or worker to irregular or undocumented. Whether the people are internally displaced or displaced across borders, their personal vulnerabilities and societal challenges vary in direct relation to whatever status they may have under the national law in their new location, and of course how local authorities, employers and people actually treat them. The fact that they are altogether both mixed and dispersed in urban density and anonymity makes it very difficult to single out one of those categories to apply differentiated protection or other procedures. With or without status, with or without trauma due to past events and experiences, with or without future prospective they are all one or more dynamic part(s) of the urban reality. To put it even stronger: it means that they not only live the urban reality but that ***the mix largely composes the urban reality and its identity in increasingly different ways; in turn, many of the societal processes are defined by their presence. All this inevitably generates new images of the future.***

Before digging somewhat deeper in this subject and showing that this component of forced displacements invites us all emphatically to look at the phenomenon from a broader human and societal perspective, I wanted to further develop the idea that while there is value to continuing the present road of expanding the identification of specific categories of displacement and vulnerability

for protection, trying to parcel out protection *strictly* one group at a time may lead into major difficulties related to the definitions that policies have been using in the field of human mobility.

II. ‘Slicing’ the issue of migration (or ‘dividing to manage’)

Indeed, in any number of fields and social phenomena, we know that ***one approach that has often proved to be effective in approaching complex issues has been to ‘slice’ the issue into measurable and manageable entities.***

Defining and recognizing e.g. a refugee status has proven useful to clarify the distinction between refugees and those displaced for other reasons. Things have become slightly more difficult when new categories of populations in need were identified and recognized. Perhaps quite predictably, things got even more difficult when e.g. migrants started applying for one status because of the utter unavailability of any category or legal status that would fit their specific situation. Many migrants leaving their country with the hope to build better economic perspectives in the northern hemisphere did not really have much choice other than to try to use the asylum procedures to make their way into societies offering them better life prospective. At the worst extreme, things turned profoundly desperate, degrading, dangerous and even deadly when increasing migrants with no access even to these meagre possibilities resorted to human traffickers and smugglers and the most precarious of migratory routes, serially brutalized, disappearing into debt bondage, modern forms of slavery, or dying along the way.

A second issue that is problematic in the “slicing” approach is the need to make sure that all ‘slices’ are not only appropriately defined but also adequately resourced so that all for whom the protection is intended actually receive it. Again and again we have seen that even as obtaining a recognized status for one group is of course an important step forward, it generates increased questions on what to be done on behalf of those that do not seem to fit within the definition of that group. A system that protects the one and ignores the other in sometimes comparable situations is not much of a useful tool.

This introduces ***a third and major issue: various pressures and common sense continuously oblige to review definitions.*** The 1951 Refugee Convention is an excellent example. The Convention provides an internationally recognised definition for those persons *‘outside of their country of origin, with a well founded fear of persecution because of his race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion and unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country or to return there for fear of persecution.’* Though this definition may have seemed sufficiently appropriate to address a particular group of people, beginning with those displaced by the second World War, it is important to remember that even as the Convention came into force it was already clear among the parties that it might need expansion. Indeed, as the Convention was being signed, States including the Holy See formally pronounced the hope that it would “have exemplary value beyond its contractual scope”¹. Accordingly, in 1969, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted a regional treaty expanding the refugee definition to include persons compelled to leave their country *“owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality”* The Latin American Cartagena declaration (1984) further expanded this definition with

¹ Final Act of the United Nations Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, Geneva 1951, Article IV, E: “The conference expresses the hope the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees will have value as an example exceeding its contractual scope and that all nations will be guided by it in granting so far as possible to persons in their territory as refugees *and who would not be covered by the terms of the Convention the treatment for which it provides.*” [Emphasis added.]

the wording: “because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalised violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order”. Though the African Union definition and the Cartagena wording are not legally binding, and but applied rather as a matter of practice, **it is clear that even the simple definition of a single group of uprooted people—in this case, ‘refugees, just one slice of human mobility—continuously needs to be reviewed.**

In this direction, a landmark joint statement of the Pontifical Council ‘Cor Unum’ and the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People in 1992 observed that while: ‘human conflicts and other life-threatening situations have given birth to different types of refugees’, regrettably ‘in the categories of the International Convention are not included the victims of armed conflicts, erroneous economic policy or natural disasters.’. The Councils noted further that ‘For humanitarian actors, there is a growing tendency to recognize such people as “de facto” refugees, given the involuntary nature of their migration.’ Finally, arguing at once against both too narrow and too broad a definition (or ‘slicing’) of refugee and other protection, the Councils asserted—with clarity that continues to be provocative: ‘In the case of the so-called “economic migrants”, justice and equity demand that appropriate distinctions be made. Those who flee economic conditions that threaten their life and physical safety must be treated differently from those who emigrate simply to improve their position.’ Indeed today a UNHCR working paper reads “... forced migrants are defined as persons who flee or are obliged to leave their homes or places of habitual residence because of events threatening to their lives or safety. Forced migration has many causes and takes many forms. People leave because of persecution, human rights violations, repression, conflict and natural and human-made disasters. Many depart on their own initiative to escape these life-threatening situations although in a growing number of cases, people are driven from their homes by governments and insurgent groups intent on depopulating or shifting the ethnic, religious or other composition of an area. This definition of forced migrants includes persons who cross international borders in search of refuge as well as those who are internally displaced. Also of concern are persons who are at high risk of forced migration, particularly war-affected civilian populations and stateless persons. Refugees are a subset of forced migrants who have a special status in international law, coming under the terms of the UN Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.”²

This adapting and broadening of the refugee definition is a result of gaps that are gradually being recognized and addressed but it doesn’t take long to understand that the broader any one definition becomes, the less workable it can appear. In fact, adding numerous other causes of displacement not only extends the reflex to ‘slice’ and categorise human mobility and societal responses, but also seems always either to leave gaps nonetheless—or even point to new ones!

A last issue that makes this sliced approach somewhat difficult is the question how many of such ‘slices’ or categories the world would need to cover all causes of forced mobility and/or needs resulting from it? The Oxford Refugee Studies Centre recently recommended in a study on forced displacement to further categorize forced migrant groups, including a concept of ‘survival’ migration and migrants. Such a distinction, for new ‘slicing’, raises the question: is departure really voluntary when drought or famine menace, when after generations of slave labour there is suddenly a way, a perception or even remote hope that life can be different and dignity possible for you or your children somewhere else? But in this context, will we need to subdivide the issue of displacement in terms of forced mobility due to man-made conflicts, natural disasters, life-threatening elements alone or, given that non-promising economies drive people away from home as much as violence and hunger *per se*, are we ready to include the lack of economic prospective? A subsidiary question specifically related to the internally displaced is the debate on how far away from home displacement starts?

² *Forced Migration and the evolving humanitarian regime* (2000); Working Paper No. 20; UNHCR p. 4.

Of course ***a principal function of taking ‘slices’ of human mobility is to build and change societal structures in order to better act upon the defined group.*** UNHCR became a highly useful tool as an institutional lever to monitor and guarantee the protection of refugees and asylum seekers and has recently been re-tooling to include internally displaced as well. The organization has come a long way in this process but that does not mean that either it or other intergovernmental structures will be permitted, let alone, created to serve the many other groups of displaced that need protection. In a world where numbers and mandates matter but often diverge, among the 214 million international migrants worldwide, ‘only’ some 15 million refugees and 27 million internally displaced by conflict are directly addressed by UN agencies with displacement mandates. It seems eminently clear that there is important political resistance to create a broad, single UN Migration Agency, perhaps also because the range of contemporary displacement and migration simply connects with too many different issues.

To be clear, defining migration policies on the basis of slicing the sociologic group in various categories is a logical and tempting approach. Slicing is manifestly useful as a management tool, i.e., ‘dividing to manage’, *provided* in particular that it requires two different chapters: one to look at the protection issue and one to look at the societal component and dynamic issues. We therefore do not recommend to abandon the ‘slicing’ approach; on the contrary, as a matter of Gospel mandate, mission and action worldwide, we know that the Church is constantly pushing at every level to discern and respond to human vulnerability, both in slices and in integral phenomena. What that engagement and experience teaches us is that it is essential to put more focus and emphasis on the societal components and as a network of diverse Catholic actors together with others to devote considerably more energy and time in studying, in-depth, how the various forms of human mobility translate in terms of societal composing and re-composing of groupings and structures. This brings us back to my previous point, that in addition to the methodological approach developed along the concept of groupings (slices) ***we also need to look more closely at the real focus of our concern: the human person and his belonging to and interaction with larger groups.***

III. From protection to well being

When the first need for protection is satisfied, the need for increased and sustainable well-being re-emerges as the fundamental issue. It takes special management vision, effort and resources to really help displaced people to re-integrate in the country or community of origin or integrate in a new place. It is well known how long a displaced person may have to wait for such a prospect: consider that more than half of the world’s recognized refugees have been waiting for over 15 years for one of the three well-established “durable solutions” for refugees, i.e., to either stay and integrate where they are, repatriate, or resettle in a third country. Such delays relate not so much to the immediate action to establish first protection but much more to the societal resistance to integrate or re-integrate the persons in need of a durable solution. Indeed, despite all good efforts, resettlement in a third country remains a solution for not even 1% of the refugees. UNHCR High Commissioner Guterres has recently begun to explore the viability of a “fourth” durable solution for refugees, if not for broader categories of displaced persons as well: specifically, regular migration channels, including labour migration. Clearly, such an approach would bring the search for solutions even closer to the societal realities of destination countries.

There are indeed a number of solid arguments to be given that support the idea ***that this second step in the field of protection is much more about societal processes of admission, reception, integration and reintegration in the new geography and community*** and that these processes can, to a large extent, also be comparable for refugees, other displaced persons, persons returning voluntarily or in enforcement processes to their countries of origin. Admission, reception,

integration and reintegration processes are much more related to societal behaviour and community building: processes that need flexibility, and not sentimental, but true compassion.

All this brings us very close to an integral concept of human mobility, which is, in its first instance a societal and a political challenge. Though repeatedly heralded that human mobility will be the **social phenomenon** of our century, it seems as if the importance of this social dimension is still insufficiently understood. Recalling the 214 million international migrants - a relatively stable proportion of the total global population – but nominally a net increase of about 12% compared to the 2005 figures (191 million), the UN Development Program (UNDP) estimates that there are a further 740 million *internal* migrants – including forced displaced- in the world, which is almost 4 times more. Taken together then, the total figure of nearly one billion international and internal migrants indicates that nearly 1 person out of six of the global population is in a migrant or human mobility situation. What is more, the figures help us understand that, when logically assuming that the mobility of every person affects at the *very* least one person left behind and one person on the location of arrival, it could be roughly stated that **human mobility directly affects more than 50% of the global population** and all communities, societies, nations and regions—which should long have been a clear signal of the urgent need to look at things differently. But it is not only figures that are convincing of the need to approach the issue differently: human mobility with all its components and subgroups has become an icon on our global society screens, a driver of many more globalization phenomena and a profound challenge to our societies. Understanding human mobility may well prove to be key and condition to our global future and existence, our communities, societies and nations. ***This may invite us to consider this mobility in its full size and not only slice by slice.***

Allow me to add here that the title of your respective studies which will be presented clearly seem to indicate the need for this embracing logic. Subjects on the socialization trajectories of displaced children, characteristics of displaced female family heads, the study on families and their resilience process, the situation of displaced 10 years later, profile of displaced by social violence, study on the infrastructure projects, the perceptions and experiences in rural municipalities, a study on Lebanese villages 25 years after displacement, the social cost of development induced displacement on youth, the dynamics of gender and displacement in a metropolitan, the study of living conditions of displaced in Bangkok; they all point at the crucial role of society in whatever subject we approach and the life-changing value of society for those displaced. And again, what is true for displaced when entering the new communities, is generally true across-the-board for refugees, economic migrants and the many categories that belong to the sphere of human mobility. ***Their past may be different; their future walks comparable roads.***

There is one other logical approach that invites us to consider a complementary and different approach to mobility ‘slicing’. Approaching migration not only in slices of context or connectors, e.g., migration and health, migration and security, migration and integration—each typically with its own societal logic and frameworks.. or strictly from an economic perspective, as a cost factor or a society-disturbing element, is not paying due attention to its global character, nor to the human person or to the consequences that this human mobility has on our existing definitions, organisations, legal and procedural frameworks. This approach raises an important dialectical question: ***Do we want to know how our existing schemes can integrate migration or rather how migration invites to review our existing societal definitions?***

Allow me to immediately add a second and related question: ***are we using the right tools to read and make the proper analyses?*** Both questions may sound a little provocative at the opening of a colloquium that intends to assemble the many academic insights and studies on the phenomenon and its related phenomena, but they merely result from the reading of the many gaps, inequities and injustices that have to be countered and alleviated if we truly want to serve humanity.

IV. Identifying common ground to monitor and manage human mobility (including displacement)

The past decade has delivered a great number of interesting studies and reports mainly focusing on the causes of migration, its social impacts, its economic relevance, possible integration methodologies and many more subjects. Sound research and solid academic approaches are therefore of the highest importance to building correct policies and attitudes. Universities have in this an important societal and to some extent even political responsibility in continuously inviting governments worldwide to the building of adequate and efficient policies. It is my conviction that such healthy relationship between scientific analysis and political implementation needs to be further fuelled with the understanding of other civil society actors, including the non-government organisations who are close to human and societal realities and indispensable in further sharpening the lens delivering a correct and true picture.

Existing societal processes of rich and other destination countries are very often questioned, and often prove to be inadequate when confronted with human mobility issues, generating new emergency situations and inviting governments to ‘panic football’. Especially in the global ‘north’, human mobility seems to result in excessive protective *im*-mobility, generating other divides and very much affecting social cohesion in the countries of origin, transit and destination. National politics which are traditionally meant to protect citizens and increase their well-being are no longer adequate *by themselves* to deal with the global challenges such as the management of demographic imbalances, globalized labour markets, natural resources, ecologic shifts, economic patterns and migration issues. It is also obvious that regional structures and processes do not yet have sufficient means to build the necessary compromises between states reticent to give up even some of their sovereignty over migration, and that any form of even complementary global management would face significant challenges if it were to be given structural authority alongside or over national and regional approaches. In short, the space offered for global authority is very narrow, as it seems to be widely felt that the more global the structures, the further national decision making processes become reduced. Unfortunately, in the classic dead-end of ‘either-or’ thinking when experience and evidence seems so clearly to call for both-and reflection, it is often as if national and international approaches to managing human mobility are considered to be necessarily exclusive or adverse rather than complementary exercises of strategic and practical cooperation. This phenomenon probably owes in great part to well known contradictions between conceptual thinking, individual feelings and praxis: we may all approve of the need for coordination but that doesn’t mean we like to be coordinated.

Human mobility involves a larger number of human, individual and societal processes which cannot be isolated from the simple and very basic cravings of every human being to survive, strive for a better living for himself and his family and of belonging or affiliating to one or more groups. Whatever sociologic groups migrants belonged to prior to moving, they are rarely given automatic access to join similar groups in the community of arrival. That is, physical displacement also almost always engenders sociologic displacement, at least of a temporary nature but long-term and even life-long for many. Remedies of restoring and maintaining connection to countries or communities of origin and/or coming to belong within new sociologic groups in the migrant’s new country or community take time.

Future policies on human mobility will need to anchor in these sliding sociologic groups and further develop on the understanding that the arrival of newcomers and the period of gradually integrating may take generations, involving ***dynamic, individual*** and ***societal processes*** that ***are fact and part of evolving community life, as much as of urban, national and global settings.***

V. Better global responses to the global phenomenon of mobility

In discussing the challenge of better managing this mobility with the many of the leading actors in migration today, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) first inventoried five elements that already exist, and greatly interact (if at times clashing) in organizing human mobility at all levels: [1] national policies and programmes, [2] bilateral regional and global dialogues and exchange of practices, [3] formal regional structures, [4] multilateral systems and [5] international legal frameworks. Important questions were raised on the sum of their efforts, which has not yet resulted in any form of coherent global governance.

The fact that neither the existing institutions nor their sum today delivers adequate answers does not mean that there is a need for a *tabula rasa* action dismantling and replacing those bodies. It is merely an invitation to modify the focus to be put on the accompaniment of ***a gradual societal process involving the many actors with renewed responsibilities***. Such process calls for sustained vision and courage, for longer term planning, political willingness and shared responsibilities. As the Holy Father has repeatedly emphasized, what is needed is both greater solidarity and an ethical, practical balance of global management and subsidiarity.

Global challenges and realities are not only about societal responsibilities carried or not, but also about how these are anchored in moral and ethical grounds. Striving for the protection and well being of *nationals only, or of only the most highly skilled among migrants and displaced persons*, is therefore an unacceptable limit, which raises ethical, moral and even practical questions. We might agree that moral considerations may much more be of an ‘inviting authority’ kind to make the right choices and not the kind of ‘compelling authority’ that forces all to act accordingly, but these dimensions definitely need to become integrated parts of the goal setting and the societal solutions. That is where we will build an authentic—and lasting—common ground for all: not in profit for some, but in well being for the many. ***To a surprising extent, it may actually be about using much the same tools with a different goal setting and a different mentality.***

All of these elements clearly indicate that there is an important road to go even as our world is already going through times of important transitions. There is indeed no simple switch that will bring us out of the many grey zones and darkness into the bright light nor is there one institution that can or even would be allowed to act as a supreme authority. But that is precisely our role as Catholic organisations in the global environment: accompanying, mending and healing, discerning living and developing possible answers. It is only in a longer-term process involving the many actors, including the role we as Catholic actors have to play, that a fundamental change in mentality will bring about the longer lasting solutions the whole world needs.

VI. Practical management tools in this process

When raising the question on the elements that will contribute to this process, many practical answers can be given. I would limit the list here to three, which are of course part of what the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) is actively promoting:

A first and most important approach is the establishment of **a better developed international legal framework**: national and intergovernmental institutions may find it easier to handle some of the aspects related to migration if sufficient and adequate legal frameworks are provided for them to further decide on ‘contextualised implementation’. Rather than providing the musts and the ‘do not’s’ we may want to consider *promoting at least minimum standards and benchmarks for the*

future. This challenge is universal, but has been given increasing attention in mobility contexts. In recent years for example, the Philippines has been steadily building a system to protect their nationals when going abroad; though the approaches and mechanisms are neither perfect nor sufficiently shared by the countries to which these migrants arrive. While the rights of all migrant workers are protected—on paper—by a number of core UN and ILO Conventions, that does not mean that their rights are being respected. Millions of migrants working as domestic workers and in agriculture, construction and hospitality sectors in Asia, Europe, the Gulf countries, North America and elsewhere utterly depend on and are exploited by recruitment agents and employers, among others,

ICMC continuously advocates for rights as practical for political authorities and not simply a burden on them. Ensuring protection for all migrants on a legal basis wherever they are and whatever their trade, formation or activity, will undoubtedly facilitate the work of existing national and international institutions and e.g. reduce the risks of human trafficking and new forms of slavery. The UN Migrant Workers Convention is clearly a step in that direction but not yet accepted by most governments of rich countries. I cannot sufficiently emphasize that the establishment of rights and duties is of the essence for the future, especially in a world marked not only by growing demographics (6 billion now and in 30 years 9 billion) but by ever-widening demographic *imbalance*, with the working population of the global ‘north’ in steep decline and the need for unprecedented numbers of workers from the ‘south’.

A second approach in line with the encyclicals *Populorum Progressio* and *Caritas in Veritate* is the shifting away from the economic profit principles that deepen the divide between those who have and those who don’t, towards a more well-being oriented policy. It is not so much economics that are wrong, but rather the exaggerated priority given to profits and results. Only when the economic principles include moral values related to the principle of the universal common good will the possibility of identifying common ground and future benchmarks look entirely different.

Consistent with Catholic social teaching and along with countless other Catholic organizations, **ICMC consistently promotes the idea of a different perspective, starting from the human person and his/her dignity.** (Economies need not to be built to serve the profit but to serve the human person. Xenophobia is unfounded fear; racism is a misunderstanding of the value of the other person; the smuggling and trafficking of human beings belongs to the profit world and thrive mainly in the absence of national and trans-national systems of governance, etc.)

A third and most practical tool is **a needs-based approach**. This most practical path ahead of us starts from simple realities that are regrettably too readily put aside when searching for common ground. The number of fundamental needs is astounding and delivers work for decennia if not centuries: there are human and societal needs to accompany the processes of continuous societal de-composing and composing; the need for frameworks that protect families de-united by migration and that protect millions at risk of exploitation and growing poverty; the need to bridge the gap created by the growing reluctance to recognize rights; the need to promote policies of inclusion and not of exclusion; to review societal and community levels of cities today hosting more than 50% of the global population; to enforce the right *not to migrate* through further investing in sustainable development and to prevent people from being against their will uprooted.

In promoting alternatives to forced displacement, ICMC identified gaps and made a number of important recommendations³ that you will find in the publication *Dignity Across Borders*, which reports the findings that came out of an ICMC regional meeting uniting the Bishops’ Conferences in Asia. These recommendations explain the need to build incentives to not migrate or re-migrate; to

³ *Dignity Across Borders* (2008); ICMC; pp. 22-25.

reduce the development gap and existing structural gaps; an important need to work at the research gap and above all to overcome the sincerity-convergence gap in which stakeholders of all kinds have increasingly voiced agreement that ‘migration should be by choice and not necessity’, without taking steps to devote authentic attention to the quite conspicuous root causes that compel people to migrate.

Such an approach clearly follows different logics than those marked by institutional or economic self-protective interests. Starting from the many needs is a process which allows differentiation in methodology and which acknowledges diversity; *it bends competition to become a positive driver in developing better responses and it offers a measurable and verifiable context for co-responsibility*. The lens with which we look at the context is then focusing on societal gaps, on the human hunger for respect, on global inequities, injustice and poverty. The context then looks less like hurdles or walls that prevent corrections; it is not limited to managing discrimination and xenophobia, not about only returning boat people, not about re-arranging profit-oriented policies in different ways but pursuing the same goals. Such an approach is about looking at the context from a human perspective and from an honest – call it *intellectually objective* – recognition of the many needs and existing inequities. Even if cold water fear and short-term thinking still remain prevalent in the political world, gaps and needs are always there to remind us all, in an almost brutally straightforward way- about non-results and growing responsibilities.

There are many more tools that serve the process and referring to those mentioned in the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, one discovers valuable and useful tools: fraternal reciprocity, social value, the principle of subsidiarity, the concept of a new political order including the re-evaluation of the role and powers of public authorities to name just a few. What seems important in defining the tools is the conclusion that ***the future can no longer be built solely or mainly by ideologically based political views***. The future needs to be built based on a better understanding of today’s realities and a future perspective. It is in this sense of revolutionary value to read in *Caritas in Veritate* that Pope Benedict XVI doesn’t so much call for institutional actors to come together and collaborate but rather for “faith, theology, metaphysics and science to come together in a collaborative effort in the service of humanity”⁴. What will be gained, the Holy Father assures, is that “Remarkable convergences and possible solutions will then come to light, without any fundamental component of human life being obscured”⁵.

VII. To conclude

There is an image that is so simple and yet so revolutionary in its truth that I like to recall it here: what a sea change it must have been to come to the understanding that our world is round instead of flat. This intellectual tsunami not only modified human thinking on the globe’s geography, size and its limits, but profoundly affected thinking and future perspectives. Today’s tides and flow of human mobility may well be the same kind of strong invitation to look at the societal concepts in a fully different and more future oriented way.

It is the task of academics to contribute with clear analysis and to act as a continuous corrector to the way that our societies—and world—think and try to organize themselves. It is a particular task, and grace, of Catholic academics to do this from the *human* perspective: proving and tirelessly asserting a deep respect for human dignity.

Thank you.

⁴ *Caritas in Veritate*, 31.

⁵ *Ibid*, 32.