



## **Deaths in the Mediterranean: urgent need for immediate and long-term solutions**

Geneva, 22 April 2015 – Deeply concerned about the recent tragedies of migrants and refugees dying in the Mediterranean, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) calls upon governments, in particular European Member States, to urgently adopt a comprehensive plan of action to save lives and develop adequate longer-term solutions.

Gathered in Rome on 20 April, ICMC's Governing Committee - composed of representatives of church organizations working on global migration issues -focused on the tragedies of the past week. During the course of the meeting, there were reports that several other migrant boats in the Mediterranean were in distress or sinking—confirming fears that “high season” for such crossings has started and will bring more.

"It is totally unacceptable to stay still in front of these tragedies and wait for more to happen", said Johan Ketelers, Secretary General of ICMC. "There is an urgent and immediate need to organize life-saving interventions and develop longer-term measures. Migration—especially when safe and rights-based —is a way forward for individuals and families and also for communities, nations and humanity as a whole”.

ICMC commends the efforts of EU Member States to propose immediate actions to be taken in response to the crisis situation in the Mediterranean, in particular through an action plan. However, ICMC deplores that the [10-point plan](#) released on Monday focuses more on border control and enforcement than on saving lives and developing longer-term solutions. In particular, the plan concentrates on stopping smugglers' activities and preventing "irregular migrants" from entering EU countries.

While it is important to stop anyone who exploits desperate migrants, human trafficking and smuggling are symptoms, not causes of these dangerous journeys. ICMC believes that a more robust and comprehensive set of actions is needed to establish legal ways to protect migrants and refugees trying to escape conflicts and other crises.

### **Key actions needed within a comprehensive plan**

To respond to this emergency, both immediately and in the long-term, ICMC renews its calls upon governments in the EU and beyond to:

- Set up **safe humanitarian channels** for regular migration, so that smugglers and traffickers do not have a means to operate.
- Respond “**needs-first**” to all migrants and refugees in distress at sea or on the move anywhere, followed by careful differentiation that enables each to further access the specific rights they have as refugees or asylum-seekers, children, victims of torture or human trafficking, etc.

- Invest in rights-based, protection-sensitive **operational models** that monitor departures, itineraries and arrivals.
- Significantly widen grants of temporary **humanitarian visas** to people in need of protection.
- Clearly define **annual mandatory quotas for resettlement** and other **humanitarian admissions**. It is time to adopt a straightforward formula that more fairly shares responsibility for these solutions among states, for example based on a clear percentage of a country's population and/or gross national income.
- Increase **legal channels** for asylum processing, including abroad, and for reality-based labor migration and family re-unification.
- Actively promote the **reception and integration of migrants and refugees**, facilitating their orientation and inclusion, offering social guidance, training, employment counselling and access to the labor market.
- Achieve **political solutions** that effectively protect populations in and from war or conflict-torn countries, and address other root causes of these dangerous journeys.

In all of these actions, states should more deeply engage with civil society organizations, including NGOs, churches, migrant associations, diaspora groups, and local authorities, who are key in achieving long-lasting solutions.

ICMC, together with civil society partners worldwide, stands ready to support governments in the implementation of a larger and more ambitious plan of action that takes into account the benefits of migration, integration and development, and not only the burden-sharing and costs involved in humanitarian operations.

---

## About ICMC

ICMC, in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), has been working on the ground since 2010 in providing help to migrants and refugees arriving on the shores of Greece and in supporting the Greek government in its asylum reform. ICMC's experts have been deployed to border locations, including the Greek islands, to provide counselling and protection to vulnerable people.

With funding from the U.S. State Department, ICMC runs the Resettlement Support Center for Turkey and the Middle East. At its offices in Istanbul and Beirut, ICMC processes the application of refugee cases referred by UNHCR for resettlement to the United States. ICMC also works with UNHCR on a separate program to identify and deploy, on an annual basis, over 170 resettlement experts to 70 UNHCR's field offices around the world.

ICMC has been advocating for better protection at sea in UN and other high-level meetings. In March 2015, together with other 125 civil society organizations, ICMC delivered a [joint statement to the UN Human Rights Council](#) to express concern for the number of migrants' deaths in the Mediterranean and the lack of adequate responses from European States. In December 2014, ICMC organized an [event](#) in Geneva that brought together migrant survivors, sea rescuers, governments and others to reflect on the tragedies in the Mediterranean.

ICMC also leads the [SHARE network](#), which includes regional and local authorities and civil society partners all over Europe. Together, they promote welcoming communities, reception and integration programs for refugees, and encourage stakeholders to host refugees at the local level.

## Contact

Nathalie Perroud, Senior Communications Officer, ICMC Geneva

Email: [perroud@icmc.net](mailto:perroud@icmc.net)

Tel. +41 22 919 10 26