

Statement of the International Catholic Migration Commission

Johan Ketelers, Secretary General

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, colleagues and partners in migration policy-making and practice,

This Council meeting has again – and probably even more prominently – shown that migration everywhere offers a wide variety of possibilities depending on how we respond to it. Effective responses however, grow or die on two important tools and logics: clarity in governance and respect for human dignity and life.

The goals are then clear: how to successfully mix the logics of national responsibility with global logics that have long agreed upon respect for every human person; how to normalize at all levels an ethic that supports but also goes beyond purely humanitarian responses. How to avoid current contradictions like those between the agreement on the need for protection for all migrants that is so clear in multiple, widely-ratified international and regional conventions, and the well-over 40.000 human beings who died over the past 14 years crossing borders; how to avoid contradictions in societies that are showing high levels of community mix and still struggle to implement adequate social cohesion and integration programs; between the clear trend of some countries to reduce immigration and the enhancement of policies promoting emigration in others; between an understanding of the need for enhanced governance in the field of human mobility and today's multiplication of processes in an ever-growing expansion of new institutions, platforms, working groups, coordination frameworks... and meetings!

Again and again what we hear and say is that what we need: is more awareness, is to change public perceptions, is more communication and coordination among actors; is political will and courage. That is true, but it is really second in order. What is first needed, what is most needed is leadership; not 'crowdership', but individual and institutional leadership. Leadership is the key and inspiration to breakthroughs in practical solutions and governance: at times political leadership like in the US on positive alternatives to irregular migration and status; in Italy with Mare Nostrum; in Germany, Jordan, Lebanon and Sweden on positive responses to forced migration; in African states, in South American and ASEAN states towards practical systems for regional mobility. Leadership in organizations like yours, Mr. Swing, and in UNHCR, ILO and increasingly in UNDP; in civil society and in the private sector.

Governance cannot just be a good diagnosis followed by adequate prescription. Prescription has to be followed by the swallowing of the medicine, which is to say: by consistent action. There is today less urgency for new conventions than there is a need to clarify their implementation. This requires concrete mechanisms, developed and implemented by all of us, together. Putting the "response" back in "responsibility" — and sharing both projects as well as resources. Our growing convergence at discussion tables has now become a responsibility; not only the sum of national responsibilities, but a collective responsibility.

ICMC suggests to return – freshly – to allocating international responsibilities, goals and programming on the basis of related activity rather than simply on national identity. For example, responsibilities in achieving a shared social and development program are practical and connect immediately to implementation. Implementation is built and results are best achieved with multiple actors, including civil society; this is an enterprise of great leadership. Starting from such perspective ICMC believes the respect for human dignity can be fully integrated in how we manage this work together.

This also means that the debate on who may be the leader has become less urgent than the actual need for such leadership. That is, the first question is not who should be the leader but who is already leading and will lead, individually and collectively, i.e. as an international agency or agencies, as political leaders at whatever governmental level or part of the world, in civil society and the private sector. Leadership is demonstrated in the doing of the work: not desk-top; not in ever-more crowded processes and coordination models, but in the day-to-day, on-the-ground moving on these urgent matters of human dignity and life in the “felt-urgency” and the development of concrete mechanisms and models that move from these important discussions to concretely implement what has been agreed upon.

In these directions, we wish finally to express full support for the many efforts IOM has made in so many areas: in making a migrant-centered rights, demographic, economic and business case for migration in the post-2015 development agenda; in reform of recruitment practices; in attention to the family in contemporary migration, in protection of migrants as well as refugees at sea and in fatal journeys everywhere; in anti-trafficking, and in what we believe are brilliantly practical, game-changing convenings of diaspora leaders in government and civil society and mayors. Looking at so many important new NGO observers and UN partners joining IOM during this Council meeting, we can only see that we are not alone in linking the importance of migration today with a clear appreciation of IOM to continue its efforts. Together with our partners in civil society worldwide, we reemphasize and would like to improve the day-to-day, on-the-ground, concrete partnerships we have with IOM.