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- *Buona sera, bonjour* and good afternoon.
- I'd like to start with words of thanks
 - To the International Catholic Migration Commission for being our partners and for all their hard work
 - To Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada for their invaluable advice and support
 - To the Embassies of Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States for their sponsorship of this event and the support they have provided
 - To all the speakers today and tomorrow, some of whom have travelled quite a distance
 - And, last but certainly not least, to all of you who are joining us either virtually or in person as participants
- Now I would like to very briefly situate this workshop within its broader context, speak to the Canadian experience and some common values we share with the Holy See, and tell what I hope comes out of this workshop.
- As you may know, yesterday was the Catholic World Day of Migrants and Refugees. Today's informal workshop focuses on one piece of that overall story, namely the role that communities are playing in supporting refugees who have had to leave their countries of origin.
- While this workshop looks specifically at community sponsorship in the Global North, it is very important to recognize the enormous efforts that communities around the world are playing in hosting refugees. Almost 40% of the refugees around the world are hosted by five countries: Turkey, Colombia, Uganda, Pakistan, and Germany.
- In Canada, there is a long history of community support for new arrivals including refugees, often involving faith based organizations. When I moved to Canada from El Salvador in 1979 and joined the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America and the Calgary Immigrant Aid Society as a volunteer, I was able to witness and be part of those efforts first hand.
- Underlying the Canadian experience or model is this desire to help others adapt to a new country and to learn from them. These values overlay closely with those expressed by Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*.
- It's my hope that this workshop will achieve two objectives. The first is inspiring and supporting those involved at the grassroots in community sponsorship to continue their efforts. The second is to explore ways in which governments and international organizations can more effectively support these efforts.
- *Merci beaucoup.*