Geneva, 16 February | 61st HRC Session

Intersessional Panel Discussion on the Human Rights of Migrants

Statement by the CINGO Working Group on Migration, Refugees and Human Trafficking

Esteemed Chair,

The International Catholic Migration Commission and co-signatories are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this crucial discussion and share the collective position of the Catholic NGO Forum in Geneva.

We are deeply alarmed by widespread human rights violations against migrants and refugees. We strongly condemn policies and rhetoric that criminalize solidarity, normalize hate, and scapegoat migrants for political gains.

We are particularly concerned about the growing use of border externalization as a strategy to deter migration, often resulting in arbitrary detention, collective expulsions, pushback chains, family separation and exposure to violence and exploitation. All these practices are normalizing the lack of respect of due process and endangering basic principles of democratic governance.

We are inspired by the vision of Pope Leo XIV who emphasised: "**It cannot be overlooked, for example, that every migrant is a person and, as such, has inalienable rights that must be respected in every situation. (…) I renew the Holy See's hope that the actions taken by States against criminality and human trafficking will not become a pretext for undermining the dignity of migrants and refugees.**"*

Therefore, we call on Governments to promote the following concrete actions, to reinforce accountability mechanisms and support fact-based migration narratives:

- **Adopt the** Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (**CERD**) and Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (**CMW**) **joint General Comment/Recommendation** on State Parties' obligations for public policies to address and eradicate xenophobia and its impact on migrants. These clearly outline steps for legislative, policy, and institutional reforms and encourage collaboration across all levels of government.
- **Uphold** their **commitments to the implementation of Objective 17 of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM)** on the elimination of all forms of discrimination. This also includes submitting National Voluntary Reports ahead of the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), detailing advances in regulatory and institutional frameworks to prevent, address, and, where appropriate, penalize public xenophobic discourse.

We strongly support multi-stakeholder dialogue spaces, such as this intersessional panel, which are essential in promoting solutions that uphold human rights and human dignity.

Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to share the collective stance of the Catholic NGO Forum in Geneva.

**Address of Pope Leo XIV to members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See*