



Restoring Dignity, Inspiring Change.

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Address of John Cardinal Njue,  
Archbishop of Nairobi and President *ad interim*  
of the International Catholic Migration Commission  
to  
His Holiness Pope Francis  
08 March 2018

Most Holy Father,

It is a great honour and privilege for the Governing Committee, the delegates of National Member Episcopal Conferences, other partner organizations, the Secretary General, and the staff of the International Catholic Migration Commission to be received in audience by you. During the last two days of its Quadrennial Meeting, the ICMC Council was engaged in a sincere reflection on the challenges and the pain faced by many migrants and refugees in today's world. We also recognized the talents and contributions brought by such persons, both to the countries and populations that receive them as well as to the families and communities in their countries of origin. We were united in our deep concern for the more than 65 million refugees and internally displaced people who are forced to flee their homes because of situations of war, other violent conflicts, and persecution. We also joined our hearts to the indignities and suffering imposed on approximately 50 million victims of human trafficking and other forms of modern-day slavery.

Founded in 1951, the International Catholic Migration Commission, or ICMC, was mandated by your predecessor, the Venerable Pope Pius XII, to form a network of Catholic Bishops, religious orders of Sisters,

Priests, and Brothers, and other Catholic organizations that are dedicated to the service of refugees and migrants throughout the world.<sup>1</sup> In many ways, these holy and dedicated people, many of whom are present with us today, are the unsung heroes, since they come from the same communities as displaced persons, serve without large funding resources, and remain long after foreign agencies return home. The Secretariat of ICMC, based in Geneva, Switzerland, helps our national and local ecclesial partners to share information and good practice experiences, and to renew their commitments to restore dignity and inspire hope among migrants and refugees themselves and among those who receive them.

In countries where there is a high volume of refugees and migrants, and where the local Church does not have sufficient capacity to respond adequately, ICMC organizes its own direct humanitarian assistance programmes. During the past four years, with 11 field offices and covering more than 40 countries, ICMC has provided education and health care, assistance with daily living expenses, treatment for emotional and physical trauma, safe shelters, legal assistance, and socialization opportunities for more than 250,000 Iraqi, Syrian, Afghan, Iranian, African, Latin American, and other refugees and displaced persons and, facilitated the resettlement of more than 7,000 refugees annually to the United States of America.

Finally, together with more than 70 civil society and Church-inspired organizations, ICMC coordinates advocacy efforts to promote more just and fair migration policies at local, national, and global levels.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Pius XII, Apostolic Exhortation, *Exsul Familia*, 1952.

During the past year, we have focused much attention and energy to bring the voices of those directly affected to the UN consultations and negotiations on the global migration- and refugee-related compacts being prepared by the Member States of the United Nations. Our office in Brussels has led the way to promote acceptance and integration of refugees and migrants in Europe, which itself during past centuries, has sent so many migrants to find new opportunities in other parts of the world.

These good works are generously supported by our national member organizations, the Episcopal Conferences and other Church-based institutions, as well as by multi-lateral, governmental, and private donors. We are indeed grateful to all who make possible our service to the poor and needy.

Most Holy Father, during the past days, ICMC has, *inter alia*, elected a new President and members for its Governing Committee. We have approved a new Strategic Plan to guide our responses and accompaniment of migrating peoples for the next four years. Now we take this opportunity to thank you for the clear teaching you have shared with us, both through words and deeds, to welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrants and refugees in all parts of the world, and we humbly beg your Apostolic Blessing on our future service to the Church and to the world.