

Global Compact on Refugees
First Thematic Discussion
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Back to the Future: Responsibilities we Share, Solutions we Know

Statement by the International Catholic Migration Commission

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Mr. President, colleagues and partners,

With tens of thousands refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants fleeing and seeking refuge around world - many of them unaccompanied children!, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) welcomes today's convening.

We also welcome the active and effective engagement of faith-based organizations and NGOs to build, together with governments and agencies, a Compact *worthy of our agreement and implementation – one that betters the lives and futures of refugees, other migrants and entire societies.*

“Responsibility-sharing” used to be called *cooperation*. Many of us have been good at cooperation and practical solutions--much better than we seem to remember!

Multiple solutions, with multiple actors. Given the urgency of today's agenda to identify relevant case studies and “pilot programmes” for today's situation, let us not ignore or forget what we were able to come together on and achieve in other moments of great challenge.

- In 1979 and 1989 here at the Palais des Nations, we designed solutions based on multi-actor cooperation during two conferences on Indochinese Refugees, including the **Comprehensive Plan of Action. These solutions offered a life-lines** to boat people and brought chaos under control. Sound familiar? Recently, ICMC's President Peter Sutherland called us to go ‘back to the future’ as we search for today's solutions, when “... Europe and the rest of the world stepped up to the humanitarian emergency of that day: the Vietnamese boat people in the 1970s and 1980s ... {After neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia agreed to temporarily admit the boat people, other countries did their part by accepting a percentage for resettlement through safe, orderly processes—ultimately about 800,000. This was a truly global operation. [...] These refugees then revived their lives - and often the communities they joined. They worked and built businesses, paid taxes, and became part of the social, cultural, and political vibrancy of their new countries. “

Governments, UNHCR*, IOM*, ICMC and other NGOs partnered in this, and another million family members and workers were successfully moved in **orderly departure programmes**. In fact, through orderly departure, orderly arrival, organized reception, organized integration, with priority given to human security, national security was also made stronger. We believe that this is exactly what government leaders and people are looking for today.

Similar practical mechanisms of cooperation belong in the Compact. ICMC proposes and is willing to help convene an international workshop to look directly at what worked in the Indochinese programme, modeled on the smaller event organized by UNHCR last year, on the 60th anniversary of the Hungarian refugee crisis of 1956.

- **Another valuable mechanism was the *Presidium project*** (often called the “Lampedusa model”), which only a few years ago brought together the Italian government, UNHCR, IOM, the Italian Red Cross and Save the Children in a multi-actor, competence-based partnership to respond to the diversity of boat people arriving on Lampedusa and elsewhere in Southern Europe with particular attention to refugee and asylum seekers, children, and victims of human trafficking.

We were happy last December to see UNHCR update and again promote its excellent ***10 Point Plan of Action for Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration***. The wisdom and practical cooperation highlighted in the *10 Point Plan* and *Presidium project* belong in the Compact.

- Finally, **communities, local authorities, faith-based and other groups of ordinary citizens have been stepping forward spontaneously** with their own solutions and welcomed refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants. They have opened their hearts and houses, and invested their own time and resources. In addition, **community-based, private sponsorship**, sometimes connected to **humanitarian corridors** have complemented traditional and essential refugee resettlement and asylum processes. These practical, promising, resource-filled initiatives give life and meaning to the words “community-based”, and “private sponsorship”.

They also give *joy* to those so engaged! Such joy motivates the citizens serving refugees to advocate for and with them in local and national politics, as we have so often been reminded in Germany, Spain and, just a few days ago, by Canada in the Global Forum on Migration and Development. Ending suffering and stopping chaos is good politics as well as essential humanitarian response. This greatly underestimated community-level energy and solution-building should have a prominent place in the Compact.

Let’s put these multiple solutions, and multiple actors, together again now, in a Compact worth agreeing to.

Thank you.

* IOM = International Organization for Migration; UNHCR = the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

About ICMC

The International Catholic Migration Commission is a Catholic Church-inspired, international non-governmental organization which protects and serves uprooted people, including refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, victims of human trafficking, and migrants, regardless of faith, race, ethnicity or nationality.

Founded in 1951 by Pope Pius XII, ICMC facilitates a network of national Catholic Bishops Conferences and other Catholic-inspired institutions worldwide. Headquartered in Geneva, ICMC has staff and programs in more than 50 countries, affiliated offices in Brussels, Washington DC and Boston, and operational offices in Greece, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan and Turkey.

In Syria, ICMC provides lifesaving assistance to internally displaced Syrians, as well as vulnerable Iraqis. In Jordan, ICMC delivers humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities. In Greece, ICMC works with the UNHCR to provide help to incoming refugees and migrants and to support the Greek government in its asylum reform. With funding from the US State Department, ICMC runs the Resettlement Support Center for Turkey and the Middle East, processing the application of refugees referred by UNHCR for resettlement to the US. ICMC also

works with UNHCR on a separate program to deploy resettlement experts worldwide. In 2016, ICMC deployed 210 experts to 63 UNHCR offices in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America.

ICMC Europe convenes a broad range of stakeholders to promote welcome and integration to refugees across the continent. In March 2016, ICMC Europe published "*Building a Resettlement Network of European Cities and Regions - Experiences of the SHARE Network 2012-2015*", a detailed summary of best practices, policy recommendations, resources and tools developed by ICMC Europe and SHARE Network members. The SHARE Network includes 1,200 local and regional resettlement and integration actors in over 27 European countries, including municipalities, NGOs, public services, churches and private sector actors.

Since 2011, ICMC has served as international coordinator of civil society activities in the Global Forum on Migration and Development since 2011, and in similar functions towards the UN High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in 2013 and the UN High-level Summit on Refugees and Migrants in 2016. ICMC initiated and is co-convenor of the civil society Action Committee, which brings together 24 leading refugee protection and migrant rights NGOs from around the world for joint follow-up to the 2016 Summit's *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*.