

## **Statement of the International Catholic Migration Commission**

to the Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly  
with Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and the Private Sector  
on International Migration and Development

United Nations Headquarters, New York July 12, 2006

For Segment 1: promoting a comprehensive rights-based approach to international migration,  
and ensuring respect for and protection of the human rights of all migrants and their families

### **I. INTRODUCTION: RIGHTS = BRIDGE BETWEEN MIGRATION & DEVELOPMENT**

**This High Level Dialogue signals a global moment of choice: an opportunity to *choose the path from chaos to coherence.***

The path to coherence is basic rights, and it is the *bridge*—the missing link—between migration and development.

### **II. RIGHTS ARE NOT ONLY LEGAL COMMITMENTS, THEY ARE PRACTICAL.**

**Every State in this chamber has signed at least one of the 7 core UN human rights treaties, and most have signed many of them. We applaud in particular the 34 countries that have ratified the Migrant Workers Convention and carry the message of our Popes and Church, urging the rest of the member states to ratify it.**

All seven of the treaties describe fundamental rights that apply to migrants, whether forced or voluntary, with or without papers.

As an organization of the Catholic Church, working with migrants worldwide regardless of faith, race or nationality, **we would mention 5 human rights especially important to migration:**

- the right to life
- the right to work, and to be paid a fair wage
- the right to movement, including out of and back to one's own country;
- the right to *stay* in one's own country—closely related to the right to development;
- and we would emphasize, *especially here*: the right to participate actively in decisions that affect one's life, family and community.

Our proposition is simply that migration and development work best when basic human rights are respected.

That is, *rights are practical*—not the “opposite” of practical. In fact, *rights solve problems*.

### **III. PRACTICAL EXAMPLES.**

We agree with the Global Commission on International Migration that:

- Rights reduce the *need* for migration in the first place. Many people migrate—and often are forced to migrate—because human rights are not respected in their own countries.
- Rights decrease the desperation that exposes so many millions of men, women and children to *smuggling* and *human trafficking*.
- Rights reduce *irregular migration* by offering—and enforcing—*legal* ways to migrate and work that correspond to international and individual needs. This in turn decreases the pressure migrants can feel to misuse *asylum* processes.
- Enforcement of rights reduce opportunities for shadow markets based on hidden workers and off-the-books enterprises by decreasing the incentive for employers to seek and exploit workers who have no rights or are afraid to assert them.
- Basic rights decrease the division of nations into communities of legal and illegal residents.

A respect for rights also:

- increases alternatives to permanent migration with sensible, flexible and legal options for temporary and circular migration;
- increases the extraordinary matchmaking potential of labor markets and laborers;
- increases national security, and pay-in to social security and tax systems in countries of employment;
- improves and increases returns of people, skills and capital to countries of origin; and
- enables migrants to contribute in every way to the countries and communities they live in and come from, as full human beings.

So rights are not just central to migration, they are the key to *coherence*. Rights are the bridge between migration and development.

#### IV. CLOSE: SPECIAL ATTENTION TO 3 RIGHTS.

3 parts of that bridge need *iron support*:

1. **First**, we are most concerned about the right of migrants to themselves participate directly in the discussions and decision-making that affect them. In fact, we recommend the formal and immediate creation of a *representative body of migrants to participate in this High Level Dialogue and its follow-up*.
2. **Second**, migrants are not just economic entities or units of labor. We are human beings, with families, with social natures, roles, contributions to make and rights. We must beware purely economic or utilitarian approaches to human beings.
3. **Finally**, in all the talk about migrant labor, we must never forget those who need special protection, who might *not* be able to work, or whose work has even hurt them, especially refugees, victims of trafficking, internally displaced persons and other forced migrants. There can never be detraction, retreat, zero-sum or subordinating of those who need protection in favour of those who don't.

The High Level Dialogue is a moment of choice, to choose the path from to coherence. *On that path, human rights is the bridge* between migration and development. We are ready to build that bridge with you.

Thank you.