



**Statement by Dr. Francesca Di Giovanni, Undersecretary for the Multilateral Sector,
Section for Relations with States,
Head of Delegation of the Holy See to the
71st Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner's Programme for
Refugees
Geneva, 6 October 2020**

Mr. Chairperson,
High Commissioner,
Excellencies and distinguished Delegates,

In this time of uncertainty and anguish, we have not only witnessed aggravated inequalities among States and within States, but also extraordinary examples of solidarity, demonstrating the deep interconnectedness of the human family and our actions.

In this regard, the Holy See wishes to stress the importance of the objectives and the “vision” of the Global Compact on Refugees, in particular its calls for strengthened international cooperation and solidarity with refugees and host communities through more equitable and predictable burden sharing. Indeed, we cannot let the geographical proximity of a State to crisis situations be the sole factor in determining our shared responsibility for protection.

At the same time, we cannot forget that refugees’ talents and skills are also a precious resource. All of us have witnessed that many of the “essential workers” during the lockdowns are migrants and refugees. It is important that their skills contributions be recognized. Refugees, *can* and *must* be part of the solution! Along the same lines, we must also recognize the invaluable contribution of humanitarian workers, including the many faith-based organizations, providing hospitality and assistance on the frontlines.

Mr. Chairperson, the Holy See now wishes to highlight five main points:

First, the Holy See remains seriously concerned by the way the pandemic has been used to ignore and even undermine certain fundamental norms of refugee law, particularly the right to seek asylum and the cardinal principle of non-refoulement. At the same time, we have all witnessed important examples of States adequately addressing public health concerns while also promoting and protecting the fundamental rights of all migrants and refugees. This is the way forward.

Second, there is an urgent need for genuine cooperation within the international community on internal displacement. In this regard, Pope Francis devoted his Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees to IDPs. In order to ensure their effective protection, achieve durable solutions and, ultimately, to save lives, the international community must commit to a more coherent approach to their protection, anchored in shared responsibility. In this regard, we look forward to the upcoming report of the Secretary General’s High Level Panel on Internal Displacement.

Third, refugee camps must remain what they were intended to be, temporary solutions to an emergency. Unfortunately, protracted refugee situations are increasingly leading to overcrowding as well as poor security, living, and sanitary conditions. This is a truly pressing concern deserving all of our attention. Here the Holy See expresses its particular concern for the human rights abuses and deplorable conditions experienced by migrants and refugees detained in Libya. It supports ongoing efforts to transfer them to safe third countries, and calls for their asylum claims to be processed in a timely manner.

Fourth, in addition to access to healthcare, access to education is essential. The Holy See highlights the critical importance of adopting policies that invest in young refugees and their access to continuous education, which is also a form of protection and a way to safeguard children from human trafficking, forced labor and other forms of slavery.

This brings me to the last point, there is a need to strengthen and complement existing durable solutions. We must expand the number and range of alternative legal pathways for safe and voluntary resettlement as well as special temporary visas for refugees in particularly vulnerable situations. This includes the most comprehensive and effective durable solution: ensuring the right of all to live and thrive in dignity, peace and security in their countries of origin.

Mr. Chairperson,

While humanity works toward concrete solutions to prevent the further spread of Covid-19, we must recommit ourselves with the same conviction to addressing the root causes of forced displacement. We already know the cure: durable solutions based on effective multilateralism, centered on the human person. Let us continue to work together to make this a reality!

Thank you.