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Intervention by the Secretary for Relations with States at the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the “Road to Marrakech”

The following is the intervention pronounced by H.E. Msgr. Paul Richard Gallagher, secretary for Relations with States, head of the Holy See Delegation, yesterday in New York, at the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the theme of the “Road to Marrakech”:

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Intervention by H.E. Paul Richard Gallagher

Mr. Chairperson,

The “Road to Marrakech” began in 2015 when the international community, in a moment of crisis, came together to negotiate and adopt the New York Declaration. At that time, the sheer number of people on the move, and those forcibly displaced, was unlike anything the world had seen since World War II. It was clear that international migration could not be managed in isolation and that it demanded international cooperation.

While many immediate partial solutions were eventually found and the crisis partially subsided, the question of whether the solutions currently in place are sustainable and whether they are truly in the best interest of migrants remains. By deciding to negotiate a Global Compact on Migration, by informally adopting the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in July, and by its formal adoption in Marrakech in December this year, the international community comes together to devise more sustainable solutions and better care for migrants, especially those in most vulnerable situations.

The Holy See firmly believes that a robust framework for an adequate international response is needed. It must include short, medium and long-term approaches to migration governance. These approaches must respond both to the right to migrate and to the sovereign right of States to protect their borders and set migration policy, always in full respect for the human rights of migrants, regardless of their migration status.

That should be the achievement of the Global Compact for Migration. Although not all of the recommendations of the Delegations, including those suggested by the Holy See, were included, it must be acknowledged that, overall, the process has produced the first-ever comprehensive framework on international migration. It will serve as the international reference point for best practices and international cooperation in the global management of migration. It will benefit Governments, along with non-governmental entities, including faith-based organizations, to manage migration in a more safe, orderly and regular manner. It respects national priorities and provides countries with the space they need to respond to their national circumstances, in full respect of international law.

Most importantly, it will help everyone — States, civil society or anyone of us — to be aware of the challenges that people on the move face so that they may meet our shared responsibilities towards them, in particular toward those in greatest need of solidarity.

Pope Francis encapsulates these shared responsibilities and commitment to solidarity in four verbs: to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate.

With these principles in mind, I would like to end with the words of Pope Francis, who has given his support to this process from the very beginning. “Before the challenges of contemporary movements of migration,” he said, “the only reasonable response is one of solidarity and mercy. A response less concerned with calculations than with the need for an equitable distribution of responsibilities, an honest and sincere assessment of the alternatives and a prudent management. A just policy is one at the service of the person, of every person involved; a policy that provides for solutions that can ensure security, respect for the rights and dignity of all; a policy concerned for the good of one’s own country, while taking into account that of others in an ever more interconnected world.”[1]

The “Road to Marrakech” is a shared journey of solidarity, mercy, prudence, responsibility and respect that is good for individual countries and good for those on the move.

I thank you.

[1] Pope Francis, Homily during the Holy Mass for Migrants, Saint Peter’s Basilica, Vatican, 6 July 2018.
