

**STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR MIROSLAW S. WACHOWSKI,  
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AT THE 17<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE  
OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM  
ATHENS, MAY 18, 2009  
OPENING SESSION**

Madam Chair,

1. The Holy See willingly joins previous speakers in expressing gratitude to the Greek Chairmanship for its hospitality, for organizing the 17<sup>th</sup> Economic and Environment Forum, as well as for topic chosen for this annual meeting: "Migration management and its linkages with economic, social and environmental policies to the benefit of stability and security in the OSCE region".

2. Migration is undoubtedly one of the recognizable signs of the times, it is a phenomenon that can be said to have taken on structural characteristics, becoming an important factor of the labour market worldwide. This is a consequence, among other things, of the enormous drive of globalization. Migration is also widely recognized as a complex phenomenon. It is a reality of our days which, in its complexity, touches upon different aspects of OSCE concerns, namely, security, stability, trafficking in human beings, border security, development, human rights and fundamental freedoms etc. In this time of economic and financial crisis, the issue is becoming even more complex and deserves to be seriously considered by our Organization. In fact, we are invited to reflect upon migration management in reference to economic, environmental and social polices. In these difficult financial and economic times, these polices should be carefully studied in order to find the right balance between the necessity of protection, and more general, the moral obligations of governments to ensure the safety and well-being of their own populations, and a more universal ethic that values the well-being of each person, in this specific case of migrants.

Madam Chair,

3. Migration is one of the motors of growth of the global economy, it is also a great source of human concern, since it touches the lives and dignity of millions of migrants and their families. The dignity of human person is at the core of the social teaching of Catholic Church. In his 2007 Message for the World Day of Peace Pope Benedict XVI affirmed: "The duty to respect the dignity of each human being, in whose nature the image of the Creator is reflected, means in consequence that *the person can not be disposed of at will*. Those with greater political, technical, or economic power may not use that power to violate the rights of others who are less fortunate ... Conscious of this, the Church champions the fundamental rights of each person ..."

Especially in this time of economic crisis there is a tendency to put the rights of migrants aside. We must remember, however, that all human beings without exception, including all migrants, are endowed with inalienable rights which can neither be violated

nor ignored. States have the duty to protect the inalienable rights of all persons, be they irregular migrants or not, because a migrant's status is quite separate from his or her human dignity. Moreover, States must act so as to ensure the legally resident migrant workers opportunities of just employment and social security. In reference to migrant's rights we can not forget about his or her family. The family is of fundamental value in building any society. The Holy See constantly advocates the rights of migrant families and, in particular, the right of family reunification. With the Helsinki Final Act, the 1983 Madrid Document and the 1989 Vienna Document, the participating States committed themselves to facilitate the reuniting and regular contacts of legally residing migrant workers and their families. Migrants can only contribute to genuine development if their situation is human.

Madam Chair,

4. We can all perceive in these days the risk of acts of intolerance, discrimination and xenophobia against migrants. State Authorities can play a crucial role here, especially in sending a clear message that migrants and their families will always be protected, and that their inalienable and fundamental rights and freedoms will always be guaranteed. Furthermore, the public perception of migrants needs to be improved. Today, there can be no doubt that migrants contribute significantly to the development of the host country, that often they give more than they receive. In this regard, not only do political leaders have an important role to play through their speeches, but also the media can contribute to ameliorating the situation by offering objective and dispassionate coverage.

5. In the field of protection of migrant workers and their families various valid international Treaties already exist. The Holy See is of the view that it is urgent to muster the political will to ratify and implement the human rights instruments already developed and to make them the foundation of a truly humane and comprehensive policy. Education can play a major role. Migrants, aware of their rights, can be more secure in offering their services and talents and the receiving community, well-informed and respectful of these rights, will feel freer and safer in extending its solidarity in order to build together a common future.

6. The Holy See is confident that in this Meeting note will be taken of what has emerged in the two preparatory conferences and the first part of Forum, and that concrete recommendations will be drawn-up, including the implementation of previous economic and environmental commitments regarding migration management, economic, social and environmental policies, and most especially, the protection of the rights of migrants and their families.

Thank you, Madam Chair!