



Joint Declaration on the occasion of the 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, as part of the Jubilee of Migrants and the Missionary World, 4-5 October 2025

Migrants and refugees, missionaries of peace, builders of bridges and bearers of hope

In this Jubilee Year, as we celebrate the 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, we recall the words of Pope Leo XIV from his [Message](#): migrants are missionaries of hope and peace, called to build bridges and renew our communities through their courage and faith.

The concrete experiences of Caritas organizations, faith communities and networks for human mobility and against human trafficking throughout the world demonstrate this.

In **AFRICA** several Caritas organizations, migrant and refugee associations and faith communities build resilience and hope for migrants and returnees through **holistic pastoral, social and economic support**. They work to **transform migration challenges into opportunities for new life**. Caritas Uganda is active in refugee and IDPs settlements with educational programs and distribution of pieces of land to refugees to allow them to **regain independence and restart by living from their work**. In Niger and Gao, Mali, the Church, including Caritas, provides emergency relief and pastoral support to people on the move stranded in the desert, while helping them reintegrate through sustainable livelihoods. In Ethiopia, Safe Migration Information Centers promote informed choices and offer protection to irregular migrants and persons that might fall into human trafficking networks. In Gambia, **returning migrants**, often affected by trauma, **become pastoral animators**, contributing to the spiritual and social growth of their communities. They receive skills training and psychosocial care, enabling them to rebuild their lives and contribute to the host communities. Several organizations based along the migration route in West Africa, North Africa and Europe, are mobilising within the [RAEMH](#) (**Africa-Europe Network for Human Mobility**) to respond in a coordinated manner to the challenges of establishing civil status for people on the move, those whose birth has never been registered in their country of origin or transit and who, as they grow up, need to regularise their situation in order to fully enjoy their rights. These initiatives **defend human dignity, restore hope, and create alternatives to life-risking journeys**.

In the **AMERICAS**, migrants make a significant contribution to various economic and social sectors. Some have set up their own businesses based on their culture and skills, creating jobs not only for themselves, but also for the local population. Many are employed in construction, commerce, agriculture, health and personal care, which **also influences the economic growth of host countries and - through their remittances - countries of origin**. In Ecuador and the Dominican Republic, there are hundreds of Self-Savings Groups in which migrants, accompanied by the Scalabrinian sisters, pool their capital to finance their own ventures and experiences of solidarity economy. In Colombia, the Sisters of St. John the Evangelist support a Revolving Fund that enables migrants, especially women and young people, to create socio-productive ventures to improve their quality of life through dignified work. **Migrants and refugees often create networks and associations** and collaborate with Caritas organizations to support new arrivals, share information, provide assistance and strengthen their sense of belonging, **becoming centers of political action themselves**. Some are **elected to public office** and representatives of migrant and refugee communities are **involved in international processes** on migration and

development. They **help to shape national and global policies** with their direct experience and through **RED CLAMOR**, the Latin American Human Mobility Network that brings together more than 450 organizations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, which provide shelters, protection, basic services, quality education and training, and advocate for the human rights' protection of people on the move and people who experienced human trafficking.

In **ASIA**, the **coordinated support of Caritas in the region** (CAMBIT - Caritas Asia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, India, Thailand) **to victims of conflict** is crucial, as in the case of people fleeing internally and cross-border due to the difficult political situation in Myanmar. For example, Caritas Bangladesh carries out assistance, **training and prevention activities in the Cox's Bazar refugee camp**, which is home to one million Rohingya, now one of the largest stateless populations in the world. Pakistan and Thailand are working together to respond to the plight of **Pakistanis fleeing religious persecution** in their country. Caritas organisations in Asia, through their involvement in the **COATNET** network (Christian Organisations Against Trafficking Network), are committed to **promoting the human dignity of victims and survivors of trafficking**, particularly minors, and to combating the sexual and labor exploitation of migrants.

In **EUROPE**, **experiences of hospitality and community welcome** have multiplied. In Italy, the humanitarian corridors and the "a refugee in my home" initiative show how safe and regular migration routes and **widespread parish hospitality** create deep and solid human links. In Spain, Caritas pays particular attention to **community welcome projects**, which represent a transformative challenge for the community and civil society in general. In France, solidarity is also visible in the parishes where there are local initiatives of solidarity accommodation and sponsorship. There are strong bonds of friendship between volunteers and foreigners, who play an active part in projects to combat precariousness. **Migrant who have experienced exploitation fight against human trafficking** through their expression and their involvement in raising awareness among at-risk groups. Through their testimony, they stand for the respect of **human dignity**.

In the **MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**, migrants and refugees often act as **bridges** between divided communities, setting an example of coexistence and **mutual aid** in neighborhoods marked by poverty and tension. They are **peacemakers**. In Iraq, Caritas supports youth centers that promote reconciliation and inclusion, run by repatriated migrants who become agents of peace. Many migrants have become true "**missionaries of hope**", for example in a country like Lebanon, marked by crisis, particularly since the start of the war in Gaza, and where non-Lebanese are abandoned and homeless. In several countries, such as Somalia, Djibouti and Morocco, it is migrants who **make up the bulk of Catholic communities and keep the liturgy and Christian presence alive**, even in difficult contexts. With their prayer, devotion and solidarity, through concrete gestures such as sharing food, shelter and psychosocial support, and by advocating for dignity and rights with their community organizations and local communities, they **remind the Church of its universal and missionary heart**.

In **OCEANIA**, several islands are gradually disappearing due to climate change and rising sea levels, forcing the population to migrate to other islands or to Australia and New Zealand. But the islanders **have not given up on defending their coasts**, and are working to rebuild the land and raise public awareness. Young Caritas people in the Kiribati Islands are planting mangroves to protect their homeland from rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and king tides, as they are deeply connected to their land and want to stay there for generations. In addition to their contributions to economic life, those who leave their islands **bring diverse perspectives, traditions and cultural practices** that enrich the lands that welcome them. In Tonga, they engage in community activities, volunteering and social initiatives that benefit society as a whole.

These concrete local experiences are in fact universal in scope. Despite the differences in context and culture, similar initiatives are springing up and echoing around the world. Everywhere we will find committed people putting their energy into building a fairer and more fraternal society.

The challenges

However, today we live in a world marked by increasing numbers of people forced to migrate and, simultaneously, by intense anti-migrant sentiments and reactions. **So, despite good practice, huge challenges** remain.

- **Anti-immigration policies and institutional violence** against migrants and refugees continues unabated, particularly **in detention centers, during deportations, violent refoulements and forced repatriations**. All too often, the fundamental principle of non-refoulement is ignored, exposing asylum seekers to serious risks in their countries of origin or transit. **Migrants and NGOs** providing assistance at sea and on migratory routes are increasingly **criminalized**. **Return journeys**, whether forced or chosen for fear of detention or forced repatriation, **can be just as dangerous as the initial migration, but they take place in an even more hostile environment**. Shelters have closed, protection has disappeared and smugglers and traffickers are adapting their business models. Migrants are increasingly invisible, vulnerable and desperate.
- **Human trafficking** remains a major risk for people who are trapped in forced prostitution or domestic work for lack of any other means of survival. Even when escaping from their exploiters, they may fall directly into irregularity. Restrictive migration policies within destination countries may actually contribute to higher profits for human trafficking networks, often in collusion with public authorities.
- The **drastic reduction in international aid** (USAID budget cuts and reduced international aid by European countries) has had a considerable negative impact on the living conditions of people on the move, as well as on the humanitarian actors and NGOs who provide them with assistance. Also, with less resources to invest in development on the side of national governments, many more people will face the cruel choice of having to leave their land in order to survive.
- The **lack of a long-term vision and concrete initiatives that take into account the root causes of departure** leave many people on the move in limbo, with no prospects. People returning to their country of origin, shunted from one country to another, often have great difficulty finding their bearings once they return home. Support programs are often confined to economic reintegration, but do not attach importance to re-establishing social ties, reuniting with family, etc. Many children of migrants and refugees born in host or transit countries remain stateless because of government regulations and parents' lack of information about the legal procedures for registering their children.
- **An "anti-immigration" narrative**, which has failed to understand the dignity, value and contribution of migrants and refugees to the life of our societies, is unfortunately gaining the upper hand in many countries, including the so-called "Western democracies".

In this Jubilee Year of Hope, we appeal to

Political decision-makers in national, regional and international institutions to:

1. **Address the root causes of forced displacement** by preventing and ending conflicts through diplomatic solutions and inclusive peace processes, by helping countries to develop and reduce economic and social inequalities, by [turning the debt of poor and vulnerable countries into hope](#), and by taking bold action to address the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation.
2. **Open safe and regular channels** for human mobility that go beyond those limited to labor migration, by strengthening and expanding humanitarian corridors, protection visas, family reunification programs and regular labor migration programs.

3. **Eliminate all forms of arbitrary detention**, particularly of minors, in favor of humane alternatives such as community reception, family mentoring and supervised temporary residence solutions.
4. **Respect the principle of *non-refoulement*** and put an end to forced deportations and returns, ensuring that each return is genuinely voluntary, informed and carried out in dignity. Provide concrete reintegration assistance in countries of origin, in partnership with local stakeholders.
5. **Contribute to a change in the narrative** about migrants and those who help them, in order to put an end to their criminalization.
6. **Include migrants and refugees in reconstruction and development policies** by recognizing their legal status, promoting pathways to citizenship and integrating them into climate resilience plans, access to services and local development strategies.
7. **Develop and strengthen legal instruments and policies to prevent human trafficking and protect victims and survivors**, by identifying victims of trafficking at an early stage, ensuring their access to legal assistance and free legal aid from the outset of proceedings, as well as effective access to compensation and prosecution of traffickers.

Local communities and civil society to

1. Create widespread, community-based hospitality by **promoting hospitality models based on proximity**: families, parishes and local networks. Offer alternative housing options to camps: subsidized rents, cohabitation and income support.
2. **Involve refugees and displaced persons in the social, economic and cultural life** of towns and villages, and make **the voice of migrant communities heard** by supporting their organizations and encouraging their participation in local decision-making processes, civic forums and advocacy platforms.
3. **Take a specific approach to women, unaccompanied children and minors and people with disabilities** in order to limit the risks of exploitation, trafficking and exposure to violence.
4. **Encourage a culture of encounter and mutual respect that can counter** racism, xenophobia and stigmatization through educational and cultural campaigns, by facilitating inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, including in the most vulnerable neighborhoods, and by promoting stories of hope and resilience as tools for raising awareness.

Ecclesial communities - parishes, dioceses, religious orders and congregations, pastoral workers – to

1. **Be a prophetic and public voice for the rights of migrants**, courageously denouncing injustices such as arbitrary detention, *refoulement* and discrimination.
2. Collaborate with other religious actors to **build bridges of peace and coexistence**.
3. **Offer places of welcome, care and spiritual accompaniment** by opening Church premises to temporary hospitality or housing integration, and by training pastoral workers in trauma, migration and intercultural accompaniment.
4. **Create paths of inner healing** for migrants who have experienced trauma by sharing their stories and testimonies and exchanging good practice.
5. **Support and strengthen international alliances** and collaboration on the ground between Caritas, networks for human mobility and against human trafficking (Caritas,

COATNET, RED CLAMOR, RAEMH etc.), religious congregations and migrant and refugee community associations and networks.

Walking together towards a better future: from fear to fraternity

In this journey, the Church's responsibility is clear: We are called not only to welcome refugees and migrants, but also to walk with them, seeing them as missionaries of peace and living members of our communities. The *Jubilee of Migrants and the Missions* is a time of pastoral and social conversion, an opportunity to renew our commitment to a synodal Church that walks with migrants, recognizes their dignity and supports their unique contribution to building a more just and fraternal world. It is important to highlight the specific contribution of young migrants and refugees, bearers of creativity and hope, and to recognize the potential of migrants as actors in inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, capable of building more open and cohesive societies.