



The Church contributing to the GCM and its implementation

Fr. Michael Czerny S.J.

Under-Secretary, Migrants and Refugees Section

Consultation on Implementing the Global Compacts

Berlin, 26 June 2019

Introduction

Since the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration (GCM) in December 2018,¹ the Church, at all levels, has continued to work for migrants and refugees, promoting their rights through countless projects big and small: diocesan, parochial, religious and others. Just as our pastoral reflections contributed to the Compact, so our pastoral action on behalf of migrants and refugees can and does contribute to its implementation. How such contributing did and can happen, is the topic of my speech.

The Holy See and the GCM

In 2017, the Migrants and Refugees Section developed the 20 Pastoral Action Points responding to migrants and refugees² through a consultation process with various Bishops' Conferences and Catholic NGOs. The 20 Points are structured around the 4 verbs, identified by Pope Francis needed for a full response: "to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate".

The 20 Points were also expressed in governmental idiom for Catholic leaders and others to use in their dialogue and advocacy with governments. They were frequently referenced in discussions even before the Holy See formally submitted them to the United Nations in early October 2017 as its input for the intergovernmental consultations and negotiations underway.

Kaiserstraße 161
53113 Bonn

Postanschrift
Postfach 29 62
53019 Bonn

Tel.: 0228-103 -214
Fax: 0228-103 -254
E-Mail: pressestelle@dbk.de
Home: www.dbk.de

¹https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_compact_for_migration.pdf

²https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/20-Pastoral-Action-Points.EN_.pdf

Herausgeber
P. Dr. Hans Langendörfer SJ
Sekretär der Deutschen
Bischöflichen Konferenz

With its 23 Objectives, many commitments and proposed actions, the GCM is groundbreaking. Happily, perhaps 15 of our 20 points are reflected in the 23 Objectives. The Global Compact on Refugees is structured differently, so in the remainder of my remarks I focus on the GCM.

Methodology and structure

The 20 Points and the GCM share a similar and sound approach: they both make brief affirmations of principle or a valuable objective, followed by various practical options for implementation.

These two documents can be seen as toolboxes of different policies and practices meant to meet a certain objective. When implementing the GCM, and with a view to a stated value -- e.g., make regular pathways more available; reduce vulnerabilities; access to basic services -- it is up to each individual State to determine which policy option best meets its particular situation, to choose which option (or none) to implement and how to do so. The policies are based on a “best practice” approach, and offer concrete and practical solutions. In this sense, the GCM can be considered a pool of resources, ways and means for countries to tackle issues of migration in a fairer and more humane way, respecting human dignity.

A conviction that underlies both the 2-year process and the multilateral compact is that no State can address migration on its own. It injects a positive and constructive narrative into discussions and decision-making at the international, regional, bilateral, national and even local levels. Moreover, it acknowledges the various interconnected responsibilities of countries of origin, transit, destination and return, a new category to which the Holy See drew attention.

Finally, to implement the new global agenda on migration, the GCM institutionalizes an appropriate framework including a dedicated council, periodic reviews and capacity-building mechanisms.

I would like to share three examples of how the Holy See may have influenced the GCM. These are best practices which the Church in Germany may wish to promote.

GCM Objective 5: “Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration”

In 2014, Pope Francis challenged the international community to adopt “new forms of legal and safe migration.”³ The 20 Action Points echoed this appeal: §2 states that “Legal routes for safe and voluntary migration or relocation should be multiplied.” Point §14 focuses on family:

³ Pope Francis, Message on the Occasion of the “Mexico/Holy See Colloquium on Migration and Development”, 11 July 2014.

“The integrity and well-being of the family should always be protected and promoted, independently of legal status.”

During the negotiations, therefore, the Holy See urged an "increase" in legal pathways for migrants and asked that the Compact include clauses favouring the family.

As a result, Objective 5 aims at “expanding and diversifying availability of pathways for safe, orderly, and regular migration” and “upholds the right to family life.” Family is mentioned 15 times, including family reunification and the right to family life.

In the United States, a best practice has been developed to assure individuals and families greater security. It consists of issuing an identification document (ID) for residents in a local community. For a resident who may have limited access to government-issued ID, it provides a verifiable form of identification that may be accepted by certain law enforcement agencies, health centres, and businesses. Over the past 7 years, 20,000 ID cards have been issued to individuals representing over 60 different nations.⁴ Many towns and cities across the U.S.A. are taking up the idea.

GCM Objective 7: “Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration”

Pope Francis has always expressed concern for migrants who are in situations of extreme vulnerability. For example, young people “are in a threefold way defenceless: they are children, they are foreigners, and they have no means to protect themselves.”⁵

The 20 Action Points call for the creation of “humanitarian corridors for the most vulnerable” in point §2 and to “combat exploitation of minors” in §14. §18 also calls for a “one-off period of amnesty and legalisation”.

The Holy See negotiated for legal protection for migrants in vulnerable situations, including climate change victims, and supported the regularization of migrants.

In Objective 7, the GCM states: "We commit to respond to the needs of migrants who face situations of vulnerability [...] by assisting them and protecting their human rights, in accordance with our obligations under international law." Mentioning regularisation and climate change refugees, the GCM asks that practices for their admission be developed.

An illustrative best practice is the humanitarian corridor. For example, the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI) and Sant'Egidio Community signed a new protocol with the Italian

⁴ FaithAction International House in Greensboro, North Carolina <http://www.faihouse.org/>

⁵ Pope Francis, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2017*: “Child Migrants, the Vulnerable and the Voiceless.”

government to facilitate legal and safe entry into Italy for 600 vulnerable migrants “stuck” in Jordan, Ethiopia and Niger.⁶

GCM Objective 15: “Provide access to basic services for migrants”

For Pope Francis, “it is important to view migrants, not only on the basis of their status as regular or irregular, but above all as people whose dignity is to be protected.”⁷

In order to protect their dignity, the 20 Action Points urge that, independently from their legal status, “migrants, asylum seekers and refugees have access to basic services, including legal services” in point §3, while §5 asks for “access to justice for all migrants, independently of their legal status and without negative repercussions on their right to remain.”

During the negotiations, the Holy See asked that the basic services to which all migrants are entitled according to international law be listed in the text, including healthcare, education, justice, information, and adequate shelter. The Holy See also wanted to ensure that access to basic services was granted to all migrants, regardless of status. For this reason, they promoted international human rights law as the standard or minimum for treating all migrants, since every migrant is a human being.

Accordingly, GCM Objective 15 commits “to ensure that all migrants, regardless of their migration status, can exercise their human rights through safe access to basic services.” The GCM references “international human rights law” a dozen times.

A best practice: the KINO Border Initiative⁸ (KBI) was set up to work on both sides of the border between the United States and Mexico, in the American State of Arizona and the Mexican State of Sonora. The KBI engages Church institutions (parishes, schools, universities, social services) on both sides of the border to offer humanitarian assistance, education and advocacy in a bi-national best practice fostering effective solidarity.

Conclusion

Of the many ways in which the Holy See contributed to the GCM negotiations and final text, we have considered three examples. The local Church, already busy to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate vulnerable people on the move, is *de facto* contributing to the implementation of the Global Compact on Migration. The 20 Pastoral Action Points, made

⁶ <https://www.santegidio.org/pageID/30496/langID/it/itemID/932/Profughi-il-3-maggio-al-Viminale-la-firma-per-il-rinnovo-dei-corridoi-umanitari-dallEtiopia.html>

⁷ Pope Francis, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2016, “Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us. The Response of the Gospel of Mercy”*

⁸ <https://www.kinoborderinitiative.org/>

“incarnate” by best practices that can be found on the website of the Migrants and Refugee Section,⁹ are a starting point for pastoral planning within your dioceses, parishes and other Church organizations. With more study, reflection and communication, we can make our Church’s contribution more explicit, more effective and, hopefully, more “contagious”.

⁹ <https://migrants-refugees.va/>