



# BORDERS: WALLS OR BRIDGES?

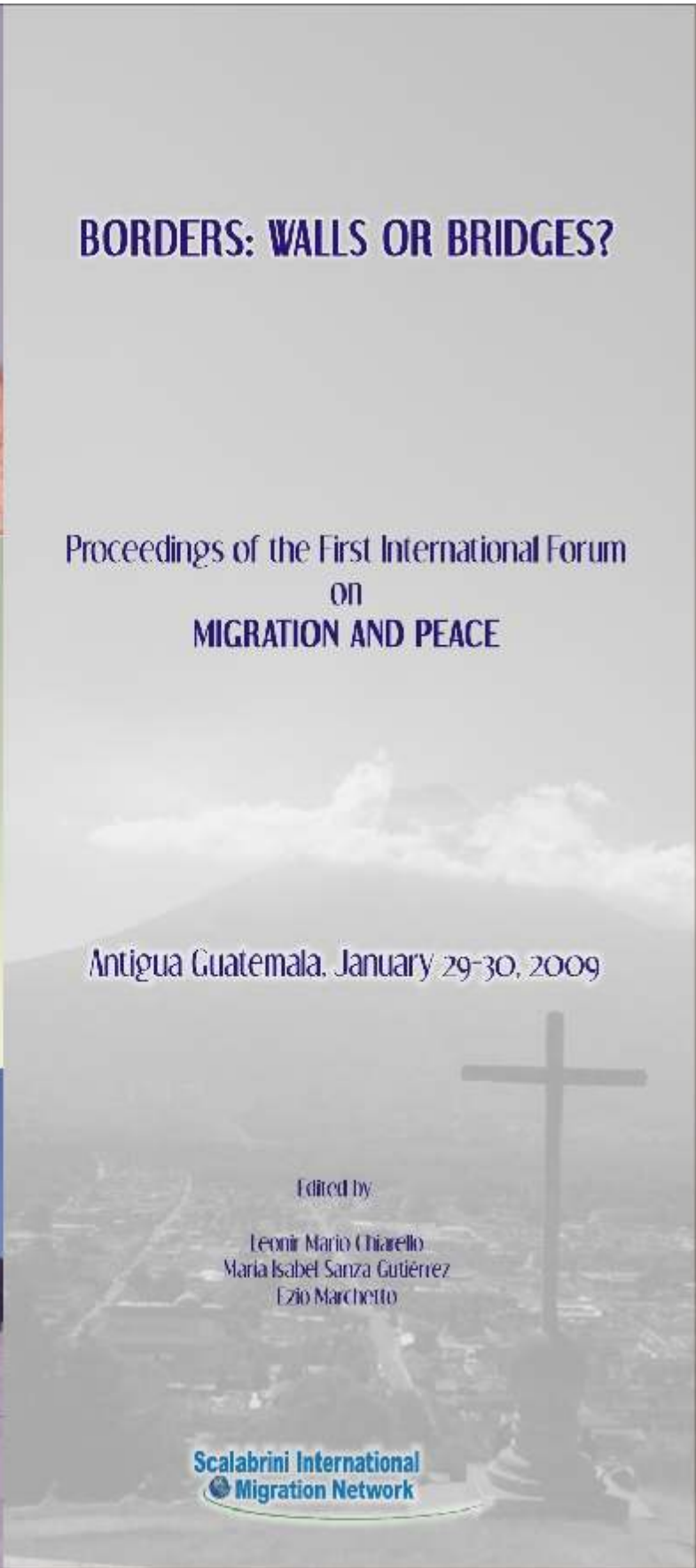
Proceedings of the First International Forum  
ON  
MIGRATION AND PEACE

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Edited by

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Migration Network



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## **Words of Welcome and Forum Inauguration**





## **Rev. Leonir M. Chiarello**

*Executive Director and Head of Advocacy  
Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN)*

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Distinguished Mr. Oscar Perdomo Figueroa, Private Secretary of the Vice President of the Republic of Guatemala, Most Rev. Paulo Vizcaíno Prado, President of the Guatemalan Conference of Bishops, Most Rev. Alvaro Leonel Ramazzini, Bishop of San Marcos and President of the Guatemalan Conference of Bishops' National Commission of Pastoral Care of Human Mobility, Rev. Monsignor Novatus Rugambwa, Deputy Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Care of Migrant and Itinerant People of the Holy See, Rev. Sergio Geremia, General Superior of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles, Scalabrinians, Mr. Juan Esteban Belderrain, Regional Director for Latin America of the Porticus Foundation, Dr. Gerhard Wahlers, Director for International Cooperation of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation; distinguished Nobel Peace Prize Laureates and representatives of the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, representatives of the international and government organizations, diplomatic and consular representatives, representatives of ecclesial and civil society organizations, guest experts, representatives of migrant organizations, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to this First International Forum on Migration and Peace.

We all know about the socio-economic and political difficulties that we currently face. It is ever more difficult to search for solutions to multifaceted problems. The relationship between international migrations and peaceful coexistence constitutes a challenge for the international agenda. All social and political agents must assume our responsibilities. On the one hand, as we all know, the lack of peace causes migration; on the other hand, migrations also disrupt peaceful coexistence.

Today, as in the past, economic crisis, lack of work, globalization processes, armed conflicts, and war, force millions of people across national and continental borders in pursuit of better living conditions and likewise seeking to protect their own lives. Immigrants will go wherever there is work and better security. In this sense, history shows that an influx of immigrants cannot be contained by walls like the one being built not too far

from here. Secular migrations cannot be held back by walls, armies, force, nor by restrictive immigration policies like the ones being implemented in the majority of the developed countries. As long as the economic system continues to exclude a large majority of the population from the benefits of development, social conflicts and migrations will continue to be persistent phenomena at the international level.

In the face of this situation, we ask ourselves: What is going on today that is making matters worse? We live in a more civilized world. Nevertheless, intercultural, interfaith, and international coexistence is ever more difficult. In a world with plenty of declarations, just last month we celebrated the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we still find the vast majority of the world's population living without rights. During colonial times and in times of occupation, there was no acknowledgement whatsoever of human rights for anyone. Today, rights are considered essential at the international level. But, what is going on that people still cannot enjoy those rights either in their own countries or when they flee? What is going on that the hunting down of immigrants has become a form of social self-affirmation, as in the case of the murdered migrants last month in New York? What is going on to make everything different today? What is going on that democratic governments are, more often than not, manipulated by interest groups? What is going on that international declarations are, more often than not, left on the paper on which they were written? What is happening with the concepts of citizenship and borders? Does dignity have borders now? Will national states continue to impose political borders on territories with a millenary culture of coexistence? What, then, must we do in order to establish peaceful coexistence? What kind of society do we want to build? What should our attitude be regarding the phenomenon of international migrations?

*“Let us not wallow in the valley of despair, I say to you today, my friends. And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’”* We want to make these words of Martin Luther King, Jr. our own, and unite them with the lyrics of a popular Brazilian song that says: *“A dream that dreams itself can only be pure illusion, but a dream that is shared is the sign of a solution.”*

In these two days of the First International Forum on Migration and Peace we are looking for a way to share the dream that human dignity has no borders. Therefore, we invite you: Nobel Peace Prize Laureates and representatives of Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, representatives from government, international organizations, social and ecclesial organizations, academia, the media, and migrant associations to share in our reflection and commitment to promote peaceful and fully human coexistence as a matter of universal right.

On the first day, our discussion will be focused on the role of the various social agents in the processes of reconciliation and peace-building, and their impact on international migrations. On the second working day we will undertake the task of analyzing the role of public policies for building bridges for peaceful international coexistence. The options may be framed as follows: Shall we continue to build formal walls or shall we build bridges of dignity?

We are grateful to all for your support and participation. We are grateful for your generosity and collaboration in contributing each grain of sand to the construction of a bridge of peaceful international coexistence. We are thankful to the Guatemalan Conference of Bishops' National Commission for Pastoral Care of Human Mobility, presided by Most Rev. Alvaro Ramazzini, for their help and logistical support of this Forum, assisted by their team under the coordination of Rev. Mauro Verzeletti. We are also grateful to the Porticus Foundation, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Soros Foundation, the Fondazione Cassamarca, TROCAIRE, Catholic Relief Services, the Central American Parliament and the Guatemalan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for their support.

Welcome everyone to Antigua for this First International Forum on Migration and Peace.

Thank you very much.

## **Dr. Oscar Perdomo Figueroa**

*Personal Secretary of the Vice President of Guatemala*

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Good morning, distinguished members of the presiding table. A very special greeting to Dr. Rigoberta Menchú, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate; Dr. Sergio Morales, Human Rights Ombudsman of Guatemala, and to all the friends who have come from other countries to this city of Antigua, Guatemala.

Welcome everyone on behalf of Dr. Rafael Espada, Vice President of the Republic, who sends his regrets since, precisely at this very moment, he is boarding a plane to Mexico City in order to tackle major issues within the bilateral agenda with our sister Republic of Mexico, as well as to work on the subject of transparency and access to information as an instrument that generates governability. Consequently, he asked me to share with you some ideas that he has been promoting during this first year of our new administration, not only from his perspective as a surgeon but also as a citizen concerned with migration. He is, and he defines himself as, an immigrant. He lived for thirty-eight years in the United States and decided to return to his country, among other things, to analyze the difficulties that produce migration.

Curiously enough, as he has often said, we are always talking about all kinds of movements: movement of vehicles, merchandise, even trafficking. However, it is difficult to find an acceptable solution for the free movement of human beings due among other things to those political boundaries we call borders.

The quest for food and opportunities is, fundamentally, the motivation for migrating. Nevertheless, we have not fully understood the roots of those basic needs that force human beings to migrate. In “Abya Yala,” as our natives call our America, indigenous peoples were already moving around to share foods, knowledge and, certainly, also solutions. The practical wealth and multicultural exchange that migration can generate may also help provide answers to the issues that each society has to face.

But above all, there is often a missing dimension in the migration debate: the question of the human being as such. Economic or material advantages are always discussed, but as a rule the analysis of human needs,

which should guide the actions of any public servant or politician, is left out of the debate. It is precisely for this reason that the Vice-President wanted to accept this opportunity to speak to you, because he believes, and he emphasizes it frequently, that the human being is the center around which all personal, professional, and public activities should revolve.

When people ask the Vice-President why he stopped being a surgeon and turned to politics, he answers that precisely both activities have much in common. In the operating room he has to make decisions and figure out how to maintain the life of a human being. In high level politics he has to participate in meetings and also make decisions that affect many human beings. It is essential to recognize that each decision, determination, and public policy will affect entire groups of people for better or for worse.

It caught our attention when it was mentioned that the discussion among social agents in this Forum should be based on their experiences and lessons learned. How might we formulate proposals that will allow us to generate public policies that may approach migration problems comprehensively?

It is worth mentioning that for the Vice-President, as a public administrator, when a proposal comes from a group that is fully aware of the problems and makes concrete recommendations based on experience or lessons learned, it is something of great value indeed. He frequently calls attention to the dangers in allowing major decisions to be made by decision makers only. Without consulting, taking advice, and listening to those who have specific knowledge, as well as those who will ultimately be affected, it is very difficult to arrive at meaningful decisions leading to public policies and government actions that actually address the real needs of society.

Therefore, possibly the most frank and sincere message coming out of my participation here today is to beseech the distinguished colleagues gathered here, not only from Guatemala but from the other countries as well, to ensure that the proposals stemming from this Forum have a developmental logic borne out of a full awareness of the circumstances, and based on what is really possible to achieve, at this given historical and political moment, for the nations involved in the processes of migration.

The Vice-President has insisted repeatedly that if poverty is not dealt with and resolved, we are not going to achieve sustainable human development in our country. These are issues that you certainly know and have mastered; yet really, in the development of the modern Guatemalan of

State, in our case, what is it that the government must do at this historical and political juncture of 2009, in order to implement structural responses that assure us that we are on the right track toward solving root problems? It is very important that the groups gathering to debate deep social issues, such as migration, take into consideration that the evolution of any State has a cycle, which for the purposes of Guatemalan public administration lasts only four years. Within such timeframe, what can be done to achieve an institutionalization of policies, which civil society may follow up in order to arrive at truly structural answers for the benefit of human beings here in Guatemala and, possibly, in other countries?

This is a call from a high level political official who is receptive to this issue because he has experienced it in his own flesh. This is his invitation and, we hope, also a productive challenge for the work to be carried out in the various panels.

In conclusion, I would like to quote a Guatemalan singer-songwriter, who has written a very popular song on the subject of migration, a song indeed that invites us to make a full revision of the matter. These lyrics, particularly in the presence of representatives of the Church, are worth pondering: “The universal visa to live on this planet has already been issued by the Creator.”

Thank you.

## **Most Rev. Pablo Vizcaíno Prado**

*Bishop of Suchitepéquez-Retalhuleu*

*President of the Guatemala Conference of Catholic Bishops*

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Good morning everyone. I would like to welcome Mr. Oscar Perdomo, who is representing the Vice President of the Republic of Guatemala. I would also like to cordially welcome Rev. Sergio Olivo Geremia, General Superior of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles, Scalabrinians. I also want to express my appreciation to Rev. Leonir Chiarello who was in charge of organizing most of this event.

The title, First International Forum on Migration and Peace, is highly suggestive, and invites us to look ahead at those countries that receive our people, and understand that acceptance is not established by building a wall of rejection, but a bridge of dignity.

The Guatemalan Conference of Bishops has always been deeply concerned for the well being of all Guatemalans, especially those who suffer or who have suffered the most. Over the years, a broad evangelical teaching has developed, which focuses on those topics that most directly relate to the fate of the people, here in Guatemala. Throughout this broad teaching several topics have been covered, such as education, the land, and other issues and circumstances that deeply affect the life of Guatemalans.

The first section of our last publication from the Guatemalan Conference of Bishops was on our point of view regarding the widespread affliction that results from the violence affecting our country. Such is the reality of Guatemala: a violence that, to a certain extent, is the product of drug trafficking from organized crime. However, that publication, at some point, also talks about all those migrants who, because of violence, persecution, or poverty, have been forced to migrate, and whose rights are currently being violated by anti-immigration policies that cause distress in the lives of many Guatemalan families. That last communication was an invitation to view life from a different perspective. For this reason, the Church reaffirms a great truth that has been spoken since the beginnings of the Christian era: *“The Living Man is God's Glory,”* and it is the living man on whom we should focus our efforts and our support by sharing our faith.

Clearly, the work of the Guatemalan Conference of Bishops has

gone above and beyond in the search for a better understanding and greater support among the bishops from the other countries of Central America. That is how the fraternal meetings with Mexican bishops, and most importantly those from the United States, were initiated.

We would like the perception in most people's minds to change, and rather than view the Guatemalan immigrants as a threat, begin to see them as a resource, the most important resource that Guatemala exports. We sincerely ask those of you who are concerned for the well being of others, to also focus your attention on all those Guatemalans who have been repatriated. Undoubtedly, some of them have been received back into the family unit and will once again flourish; however, there are others who return devoid of any kind of support and, their fate notwithstanding, simply wish to return, in any way possible, to the country from which they were deported. It is on those migrants that we should focus our attention and care, for if we do not, they will be a vulnerable group whose fate will depend entirely on the generosity that any good-willed Guatemalan or individual may afford.

Welcome to Guatemala and welcome to Antigua, Guatemala. This is a very special city that has received us all with open arms. For all of you who believe in a better tomorrow, it is my hope that these two days we share together will truly mark a moment where the glimmer of change will shine on your destiny, as well as that of your countries.

Welcome and thank you.

## **Rev. Sergio Olivo Geremia**

*General Superior*

*Missionaries of Saint Charles Borromeo, Scalabrinians*

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Good morning everyone. Forgive me for not repeating all the names; however I do extend the same words of greetings and appreciation that Father Leonir expressed to everyone at this presiding table. Thank you.

This morning, while we were celebrating Mass with Most Rev. Pablo Vizcaíno and a few priests, he invited us to ask God, as the Christians and Catholics that we are, for this gift: that in this world of borders, we may be bridge-builders and promote peaceful coexistence. For all of us, including you who are gathered here, I ask this same gift this morning that we may learn to be bridges.

The Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles, Scalabrinians, in their 122 years of existence and working in the world of migrations, has worked closely with the migration process at an international level, with comprehensive service programs promoting the more human and Christian side of man, as it befits each particular period in history. Our Congregation was founded in 1887 by the devout John Baptist Scalabrini, in order to accompany millions of Italians who back then were migrating to the American continent, fleeing from the consequences of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until post-WWII, the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles, Scalabrinians, worked closely with this process by establishing parishes, schools, hospitals, migrant service centers, cultural centers, orphanages, nursing homes, cooperatives, migrant associations, and service committees.

Since 1960, the Scalabrinian Congregation has extended its services to all migrants, and has expanded its outreach worldwide, even arriving in Guatemala 10 years ago. In this manner, the programs and services that help migrants have multiplied, especially for the neediest. In 2006, in order to strengthen the international coordination amongst all of these services, and to promote political awareness worldwide, we, the Scalabrinian Missionaries, created an international network called *Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN)*. This network promotes a series of programs and activities in the area of development and

political awareness that benefit the people, families, and communities of local and international migrants.

We find ourselves at a moment when migration policies are increasingly restrictive. This gives rise to the incessantly growing number of undocumented immigrants, as well the negative stereotypes that label them responsible for rising unemployment, delinquency, and social unrest. As a result, the *Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN)* is implementing a campaign to foster a culture of peaceful international coexistence. This culture of peaceful coexistence between local and migrant communities requires everyone to participate, especially civic and government organizations. The civic organizations, churches, religious communities, media, schools, and other social sectors, are largely responsible for valuing and promoting the migrants' cultures, if they want to build better coexisting societies. The governments, on the other hand, are chiefly responsible for creating and implementing public policies on migration that are relevant to the current socio-economic and political challenges. These policies should be based on a greater political goal to completely integrate development and demographic policies with respect for everyone's human rights, including those of the immigrants. Without these policies, countries will continue suffering from a permanent imbalance between rising economic development and continuously regressing social development. This dichotomy is the root of the injustices and segregation that accompany the migration process and subsequent social conflicts.

We are gathered here in Antigua, Guatemala for the First International Forum on Migration and Peace, in order to answer the call for dialogue and communication between the various social and political agents. This International Forum aims to generate a high-level debate on the relationship between building a peaceful international coexistence and the migration process. This debate requires the commitment of the social and political sectors in order to effectively build bridges of peace among nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the Forum. Thank you for your participation and your commitment to building a peaceful international coexistence.

## **Dr. Juan Esteban Belderrain**

*Regional Director for Latin America*

*Porticus Foundation*

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Distinguished Mr. Oscar Perdomo, Private Secretary of the Vice President of the Republic of Guatemala, Most Rev. Paulo Vizcaíno Prado, President of the Guatemalan Conference of Bishops, Most Rev. Alvaro Leonel Ramazzini, Bishop of San Marcos and President of the Guatemalan Conference of Bishops' National Commission for Pastoral Care of Human Mobility, Rev. Novatus Rugambwa, Deputy Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Care of Migrant and Itinerant People, Rev. Sergio Olivo Geremia, General Superior of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles, Scalabrinians, Dr. Gerhard Wahlers, Director of International Cooperation for the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Rev. Leonir Mario Chiarello, Executive Director of the *Scalabrini International Migration Network* (SIMN), distinguished Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, representatives of the national, international and governmental organizations, ladies and gentlemen, I cordially welcome all of you on behalf of the Porticus Latin America Foundation.

Surely many of you are probably wondering what the Porticus Foundation is, as it is not a well known organization in the area of cooperation for international development. Thus, this brief introduction is simply to share with you what the Foundation is about and why we are in attendance at this Forum. We consider this an honor, and are very pleased to see that the dream of holding this Forum on Migration and Peace has finally been realized.

I would like to start by saying that the Porticus Foundation is an organization dedicated to promote solidarity and development. It is a holding company that belongs to a family of Dutch entrepreneurs, who for more than 150 years have incorporated into their entrepreneurial endeavors activities that promote solidarity and philanthropy throughout various parts of the world. For more than 15 years in Latin America, the development of this holding company in several countries within the region has been accompanied by an increase in the number of organizations that promote solidarity and that have made specific commitments to the various fields of

health, education, and development.

If you would allow me to explain further, I would like to tell you why this Forum on Migration and Peace is of utmost importance to the Porticus Foundation's strategy within this region. I will make my explanation brief by making two simple references obtained from two recent lectures. They will help me present the objectives of our Foundation in a clear and concise manner. The first reference is to the latest report from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), entitled "*Social Cohesion, Inclusion and a Sense of Belonging in Latin America and the Caribbean.*" This report states clearly and conclusively that a "deficit in social cohesion" is the fundamental cause for the delay in development in the region. There is a loss of strength in the bonds that make up such cohesion. What is really innovative and groundbreaking in this report, especially coming from an economic organization, is that it distinguishes between objective causes and subjective causes. Among the objective causes, there are those everyone knows about, such as: increasing marginalization, poverty, and segregation. However, in a clear and compelling way, the report states that inequality is the primary cause for the loss of social cohesion in the region. Latin America is not a region that lacks natural, human, or cultural resources. On the contrary, Latin America is a prosperous region, but it suffers greatly from inequality and poor distribution of wealth. Secondly, and this is the most surprising part, the report introduces the subjective causes for the loss of social cohesion. It is here where the report explains the profound cultural reasons for the loss of the sense of identity in Latin American communities. Divisions prevail, along with fragmentation and individualism. It is difficult for us to say "we." It is difficult for us to think of ourselves as a community or a family. The report introduces a set of variables that it uses to analyze the deterioration of the sense of belonging over the last several years.

The second reference is to the book "*City of Fears, City of Hope*" by Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. While analyzing the topic of coexistence within cities, Bauman asserts that when the national states weaken their authority in confronting the deficits within the social sectors that are produced by globalization, the cities find themselves in a paradox. They have to find local solutions to global problems, and in doing so, they have only succeeded in "*administering fear.*" This fear is provoked by the continuous arrival of "other" or "different" individuals to the cities. In my

view, it is here where Bauman takes a deep look at the fear that the migration process causes in the life of the cities. According to the sociologist, we suffer from permanent *alterophobia*: the fear of the other, the fear of the diverse.

I believe these two references, the report by ECLAC and Bauman's book, articulate the mission and strategy of the Porticus Foundation in Latin America, which is: to weave a social fabric, foster stronger social cohesion within the region, and understand that greater equality, more opportunities, and a sense of belonging are today's key words when discussing the common good and peaceful coexistence for the region. This is why we immediately identified with the objectives of this Forum.

We would like to express our appreciation to the people of Guatemala by thanking the representative of the Vice President of the Republic of Guatemala. We thank the Church of Guatemala and the President of the Guatemalan Conference of Bishops for welcoming us to this wonderful meeting. We would also like to thank the members of SIMN, the Scalabrinians, for they are the driving force of this mission and the protagonists of this event. We also thank each one of you, because it is your presence that makes these meetings possible. If you allow me, I would like to share personal thanks, as it has only been three weeks that I started working at the Porticus Program Coordination Office in Latin America. I would like to publicly thank my predecessor, Dr. Einaro Bingemer, who has been a promoter of this event and to whom we must credit a large part of this opportunity. We are grateful to *Ekke* (which is what we, his friends, call him) for this legacy. This is one more fruit of the work he carried out throughout his years at the Porticus Foundation.

My deepest desire, and my wish for all of you, is that on the last day we will be able to leave here with our hearts full of hope; that Bauman's *alterophobia* becomes *alterophilia*, in friendship and love, particularly towards those who are victims of the migration process in our region.

Thank you.

## **Dr. Gerhard Wahlers**

*Director of International Cooperation  
Konrad Adenauer Foundation*

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Mr. Oscar Perdomo Figueroa, Private Secretary of the Vice President of the Republic of Guatemala, Most Rev. Paulo Vizcaíno Prado, President of the Guatemalan Conference of Bishops, Rev. Sergio Olivo Geremia, General Superior of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles Borromeo, Scalabrinians, Most Rev. Alvaro Leonel Ramazzini, Bishop of San Marcos and President of the Guatemalan Conference of Bishops' National Commission for Pastoral Care of Human Mobility, Dr. Juan Esteban Belderrain, Director of Porticus Foundation, Rev. Leonir Mario Chiarello, Executive Director of the *Scalibrini International Migration Network* (SIMN), Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great honor for the Konrad Adenauer Foundation to have the opportunity to open the doors of this First International Forum on Migration and Peace in the Americas. These issues are very important and deserve all our support as a German political foundation, which has been working for the past 40 years in Latin America for Peace and Democracy.

Fortunately, major armed conflicts are no longer part of the current Latin American reality, although we cannot help remembering the terrible consequences these conflicts generated just a few years ago and especially here in Central America. It is true that in the history of mankind there have always been migration processes, and those of the two Americas in the last 500 years determined its current demographic structure. Therefore migration is part of human coexistence. But the instances of conflicts in Central America, Colombia's civil war, military dictatorships in Central and South America with its millions of refugees and migrants have also shown us exactly the close interdependence that exists between migration and peace. And I, personally, would like to add, after migration and peace, *democracy* as well. It has also been demonstrated that in the majority of cases, migration is connected to serious political, social, or economic necessities, and it often happens that the most talented members of a society are forced to abandon their own country.

For all these reasons, the political challenge that migration posits

makes it an important issue for the Konrad Adenauer Foundation as it deals with it in many countries of Latin America, and particularly in its regional program on social policies. For us it is important to enter into a dialogue with policymakers in Latin America, which allows us to contribute to formulating appropriate policies for the different countries. In this manner is possible to create a society that does not force its citizens to migrate anymore, and instead, affords them, within the globalization process, opportunities for development of their personal potential, to the country's own benefit. To that end we, as a foundation, conducted studies in 13 countries, developing recommendations for policies to be adopted by governments and parliaments. Those studies revealed the multiplicity of causes for migration and the diverse profile of migrants. In the least privileged sectors, the studies point out that people often embark on a risky journey to distant countries as a result of the desperate situation in which they find themselves. On the other hand, highly qualified people often study abroad and discover better professional opportunities. We also have the deplorable circumstance, even now in the year 2009, that there are still cases where people are forced to abandon their country due to lack of political freedom. Such diversity of reasons makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at simple solutions to the complex challenges of migration.

We applaud the fact that this Forum is fostering a dialogue between civil society agents and the Church, along with political leaders. Certainly, it will call attention to the high costs, in human, family, and social terms, which migration processes generate. Of course we are not ignoring migration's positive effects, such as the acquisition of international expertise, linguistic resources, or family remittances, which today have great relevance for Latin America. For this reason, it is necessary to establish an objective exchange of ideas regarding the multiple phases of migration, which will result in better policymaking in the Americas.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation will include the conclusions of this Forum in its global network, including Europe, the destination of many immigrants from Latin America. In my capacity as a European I wish to emphasize that we should not overestimate the absorptive capacity of receiving countries and that in a debate of this kind, this issue should be taken into consideration. Frequently, the least qualified workers see their jobs endangered by the arrival of immigrants, and the most vulnerable social sectors feel fear, socially and culturally motivated, when they face a surge in

the number of immigrants. This is something that European policymakers should take into account. Despite the improvements that should be introduced in the immigration policies of North America and Europe, these are issues that cannot be ignored.

We applaud the fact that the Catholic Church takes care of the underprivileged and the weak and supports these groups through a variety of religious orders and initiatives. This international perspective will contribute, undoubtedly, to focus our attention on the concerns and needs of people in all countries, and to understand that open, stable and democratic societies can better protect the interests of the most vulnerable sectors. These societies can afford their citizens all the freedoms they need to advance personally and financially, and to create structures of solidarity with the weakest sectors, in harmony with the principles of the social market economy.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation especially to the *Scalabrini International Migration Network* (SIMN) for their excellent cooperation and the invitation to contribute to this event. I wish all of you much success in this Conference and the best and most concrete results possible for your future endeavors.

Thank you.

## **Most Rev. Alvaro Leonel Ramazzini**

*Bishop of San Marcos*

*President of the Commission for the Pastoral*

*Care of Migrants, Guatemala Conference of Catholic Bishops*

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Dear friends, I believe the most fundamental motivation that inspires us all in this meeting is to become builders of bridges to achieve peace. The president of our Conference of Bishops was telling us about the communiqué that we publicized last week where we mentioned the positive aspects of the presence of Guatemalan and Central American immigrants, especially in the United States. At the same time we indicated the major concerns we have when we realize this entire situation is being experienced by thousands of deportees, more than 28,000 deportees in 2008 from the United States, and most importantly, the criminalization nowadays to which the immigrants are being subjected in the midst of an environment of racism and xenophobia. Undoubtedly, to talk about migration is to talk about many issues. We have wanted to insist on the positive aspects but we cannot refrain from mentioning the negative ones, such as human trafficking or *coyotismo* and the life-threatening risks taken by so many migrants.

On January 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, Pope Benedict XVI sent a message to be proclaimed to the Universal Church entitled “*Fighting Poverty to Build Peace.*” Therefore, although it is true that we must add the element “*democracy*” to the issue of “migrations” in order to achieve peace, it is also necessary to add to this the concept of “*development,*” because in Pope Benedict's words “*the new name for Peace is development.*” And I believe that from this point of view we need also to frame the wealth, the presence, and the value that migrants have everywhere in the world.

The Guatemalan Conference of Bishops has established a preferential option for the poor and the excluded. It is a commitment before God, before Jesus Christ, before us as Christians, and before the people of Guatemala. Therefore, it is very important to keep in mind what Mr. Oscar Perdomo said when he mentioned that the Vice President of the Republic is always willing to consult and listen to advice. Well, we at the Commission on Human Mobility are ready to do just that: to share our experiences in order to contribute, so that our government assumes the responsibility that it

must before the entire situation currently affecting migrants, especially, I repeat, in the United States, because that is where Guatemalan migrants go.

In Aparecida, Brazil, in May 2007, we, the bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean also reaffirmed our commitment to this preferential option, not just for the poor but for those we call the “*excluded*,” those who are still at the bottom of society, those who do not count anymore, the disposable ones. Unfortunately, among this entire mass of people there are the migrants; migrants who are invisible simply because they do not have a visa or because they have arrived without documents. They are not considered persons because they do not have the documents that will identify them as such. It is one of the contradictions of globalization that we, the bishops, addressed in Aparecida, hence our interest in achieving “human” globalization, a humanization of the globalization, or globalizing solidarity.

By the same token, I would like to thank the Scalabrinian Congregation for their efforts in promoting international solidarity, including organizing this Forum, where we, as the Commission for Pastoral Care of Mobility, are fully involved. I would also like to express my gratitude for the support that we have received from the Porticus Foundation, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Soros Foundation, TROCAIRE, and Catholic Relief Services.

We need to find global solutions to global problems, to articulate global efforts to meet global challenges, without losing sight of the particularity of these problems, which in the case at hand, it means the faces and hearts of thousands upon thousands of persons who move from one place to another, whether they are economic migrants, temporary migrants, refugees, persons displaced by armed conflicts, or any other group that moves in search of a more dignified life. Looking at the faces of these brothers and sisters who live on the same planet as us, and who need to be treated as such, challenges us to make a commitment to promote the globalization of solidarity.

I hope that this Forum advances this ongoing debate, with its many facets and thorny issues. But at the same time, I hope our reflections and proposals help us focus on a single theme: that we all are builders of bridges to achieve peace.

Thank you.

ORGANIZED BY:

**Scalabrini International  
Migration Network**



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