



# BORDERS: WALLS OR BRIDGES?

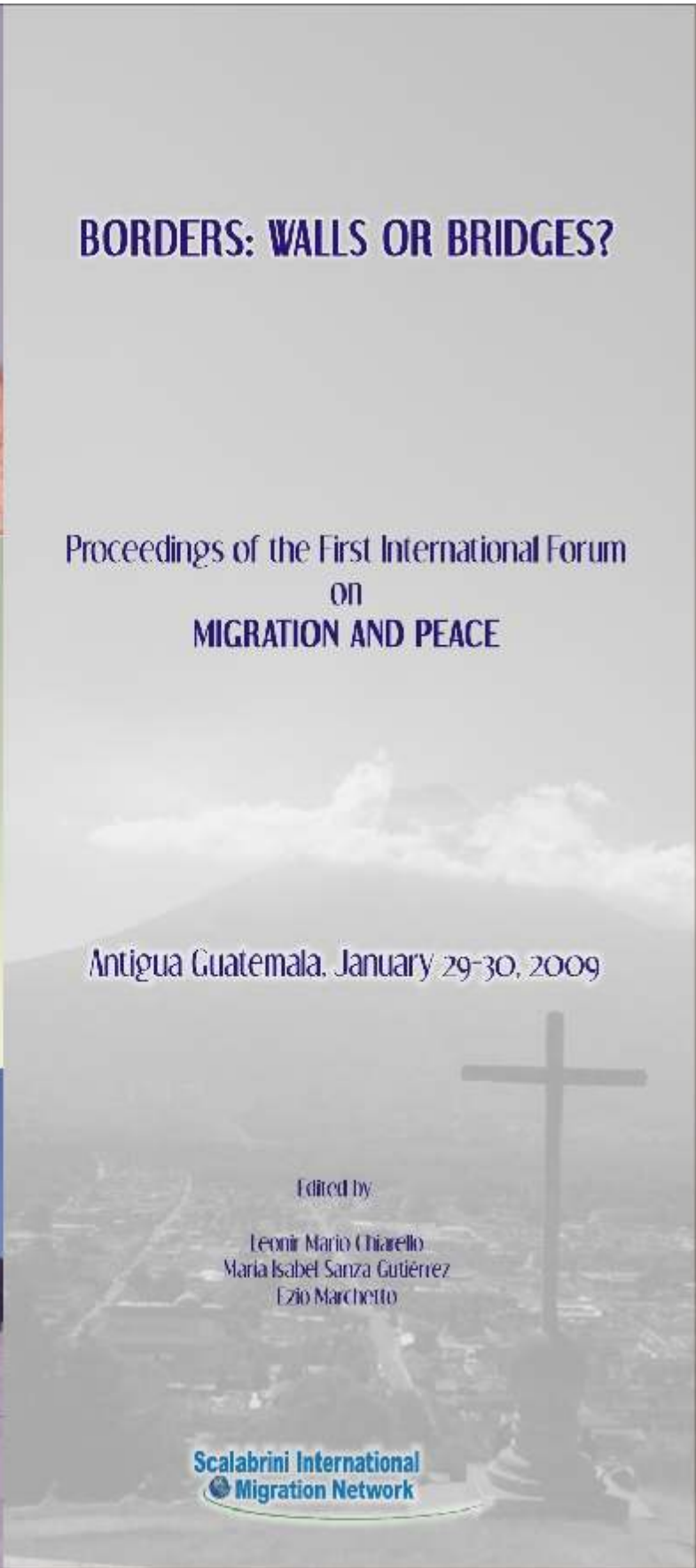
Proceedings of the First International Forum  
ON  
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Edited by

Leonir Mario Chiarello  
Maria Isabel Sanza Gutiérrez  
Ezio Marchetto

Scalabrini International  
Migration Network



## Panels

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**Panel I - Reconciliation and Peace-Building Processes:  
Their Impact on International Migration**





## Introduction

### Dr. Joseph Chamie

*Director of Research*

*Center for Migration Studies of New York (CMS)*

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Good morning, distinguished guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

It's a real pleasure for me to be here in Antigua, Guatemala. I'm also honored to be the moderator this morning for the first panel of the inaugural International Forum on Migration and Peace, which is being organized by the *Scalabrini International Migration Network* (SIMN). Congratulations to them for convening a conference on such a vital subject of our age.

Let me begin with a couple of apologies. First, I am unfortunately not a Spanish speaker. Also, I suspect that I am one of the few participants using the earphones this morning. The second apology is that I'm a demographer. Accordingly, my presentation and remarks this morning are intended to provide a demographic background for the discussions of this Forum during the next two days.

My brief presentation this morning concerns the world demographic situation. Often at such conferences we have presentations, and it is not at all clear what the speaker is talking about. We receive a message from the speaker that is frequently difficult to decipher and increasingly difficult to understand, especially if you're listening in another language.

Let me please provide you with an interesting example of this difficulty. In New York, a place that some of you have visited, there is a famous business man named Frank Perdue. Mr. Perdue sells chickens in many of the food stores in the region. Nearly everyone likes chicken and his business prospered in New York. Accordingly, he wanted to expand his business to Central America. His business slogan for selling his chickens is: "It takes a strong man to make a tender chicken." Well, of course, he wanted to translate his slogan into Spanish. He wasn't a Spanish speaker, so his company hired someone to translate the slogan into Spanish. Here is the translation that was made: "It takes an aroused man to make a chicken

affectionate.” I suspect that this is not exactly what he had in mind. Often, when we're speaking different languages, communication problems arise.

This morning I will try to be as clear as possible. What is the message of my introductory remarks? In brief, it concerns the central question: Where are we headed? I would like to begin by briefly summarizing five major population trends that the world will be experiencing in the coming decades and then provide some additional details on these most important expected global demographic developments.

The first point I would like to make is the following: the world will have a much larger population in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Today there are about 6.8 billion people on this planet and we are continuing to grow rapidly, adding approximately 78 million people annually to the world.

The second point is that the world is experiencing population growth in many developing regions and population decline in many developed countries. For example, the Russian Federation, Japan, and a number of other developed countries are now declining in population size.

The third point concerns rapid urbanization and the growth of very large cities. Humanity has now reached an historic point: for the first time, the majority of the people are now living in cities, not rural areas. This has never been the case in the past. This extremely new phenomenon is having enormous consequences and repercussions in many different spheres of human endeavor as well as the environment.

Fourth, the world now has a much older population than ever before, with people living much longer than any time in human history. In the coming decades, the effects of population aging, which are now evident in the more developed regions, will increasingly influence societies in the less developed regions.

And finally, and this will be the focus this morning of our discussions here in Antigua for the next two days, we are going to see increased migration and, as a result, increased diversity within different populations. These migration flows are indeed major challenges for many nations, developed and developing.

The historic period of migration from Europe and elsewhere to the western hemisphere was a period of great human movement. My own

happening again in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Most of this, I anticipate, will be large groups of people moving from Africa, Asia and Latin America to developed regions. So let's look at some of the trends.

Population trends and projections of the growth of the world population reveal a world of several billion more people by 2050. In addition, most of this growth, in fact nearly all of it, is occurring in the developing world. In contrast, the developed regions of Europe, North America, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, collectively, are growing very little. In contrast, population growth is very large in the developing countries, especially among African nations.

Also noteworthy are trends presented for the world's proportions of urban and rural populations. Up until now, the rural proportion has been the majority. Now, however, urban dwellers have become the dominant group. Also, after approximately another 20 or 30 years, a large majority, something close to two thirds of the world's population, will be living in urban areas. In addition, many of these people will be residing in large metropolitan agglomerations. Again, this development is something that the world has never experienced. Clearly, these demographic changes are massive in scope. How to successfully manage these extremely large cities with increasingly diverse populations will be a central challenge for governments, municipalities and world leaders.

As with urbanization, the consequences of population aging and longer life expectancies are unprecedented and profound, affecting virtually every household on this planet. The world is rapidly moving away from young populations to comparatively older ones. For the first time in history, there will soon be more people above age 65 than below five years of age. The number of children is declining as a ratio, and the proportion above 65 is increasing. In other words, there will be more elderly than children. Again, this change is monumental in nature for the populations of the world.

I wonder how many of you know of a woman named Jeanne Calment? I'll give you a hint: she is from France, and most demographers are familiar with her. The answer: she was verified to have lived longer than any other person. She was born in 1875, and died in 1997. Ms. Jeanne Calment lived 122 years and 167 days. This trend of increasing longevity is expected to continue well into the future, with increasing numbers of people living longer than ever before.

Population aging and increasing longevity are having large impacts

on migration trends. This is because populations in the developed regions, especially in Europe and East Asia, are declining and aging. Many of their labor forces are declining and many of their citizens are reaching 65, 70 and 80 years and more. These elderly persons are in need of services and assistance, and this brings us to the issue of global international migration.

Regions are not immune to human migration. Indeed, there's not a single region in the world that is unaffected by international migration. Most of you are aware that the current estimate of the number of people living outside the country of their birth is roughly 200 million. My own projections indicate that this number will be substantially larger by 2050. In fact, I strongly believe that my prepared estimate of nearly 300 million will be surpassed.

Also, as many of you know many cities and many areas of the world welcome immigrants. Consider the example of the city of San Francisco, California. The city welcomes people in different languages, with different cultures and many believe that the city of San Francisco and the state California, for example, are enriched by these immigrants.

A sign that one often encounters in San Francisco and elsewhere is "HELP WANTED." Equally prevalent, perhaps, are other signs that say "KEEP OUT." Those two signs illustrate a type of schizophrenia that is being played out in many of the receiving countries. On the one hand, one encounters a message of welcome; while at the same time, on the other hand, there is an unambiguous message of exclusion. This schizophrenia prevalent in many countries may account for some of the confusion and anxiety that many immigrants experience.

An obvious question that one may pose is: Why is this occurring? Why has international migration become such a controversial issue in so many countries? No doubt, there are many factors responsible for this situation. Given the limited time available this morning, with your permission, I will quickly enumerate several of them.

Why has international migration become such a contentious and important issue, moving to the forefront of the international agenda? Well, in my opinion, the first, and perhaps primary, factor in the ascent of international migration on the global political agenda is demographics. The populations of the wealthy industrialized countries are having difficulty replacing themselves; many of these countries are below replacement fertility, not having the number of children to replace themselves. As a

consequence, their labor forces and overall populations are aging and some of them, as I mentioned earlier, are declining.

A second reason for the primacy of international migration on the global agenda is that the ethnic compositions of the populations are changing. Increased diversity and the interactions among very different groups are presenting challenges to many communities, especially those which do not have a recent tradition of large-scale immigration.

Third is the political dimension. The issue of international migration has become highly politically sensitive in many countries. As a result, we are seeing the rise of different parties and different groups supporting opposition to international migration flows and the rights of migrants. Also, more recently, the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, and other security problems that occurred in Europe, Indonesia and other places in the world have made migration unfortunately linked to issues of security.

In addition, we have a series of other related issues that I'll go through quickly. One is the issue of asylum-seeking, as civil conflicts increasingly push people to seek safety abroad. Another is the issue of illegal immigration, which has become a major concern for many countries in both developed and developing regions.

Another issue, often mentioned in the migration literature, is that of "brain-drain" and "brain-gain." Some countries are losing many of their talented men and women and other countries are gaining the benefits of having these skilled people. Moreover, this phenomenon has become global. It no longer matters which corner of the world one looks at, this pattern is evident with no region immune from its effects.

It is also important to note that the cost of travel has become much less than in the past. People now can move much more quickly and at a cheaper price. So, we have much greater flows of people. In addition, movement becomes easier with communications and media indicating where there are jobs and opportunities. There is also another unfortunate phenomenon: trafficking and smuggling of persons.

A few other global matters that are impacting international migration include: the WTO's General Agreement on Trade Services (GATS), the intervention of nongovernmental organizations to protect immigrants' rights, and the ascent of migration to the top of the United Nations agenda.

Finally, there is the question of what should be done. Based on my experience, the first thing that usually happens is denial. People say “Well, this isn't really a big issue; it's not a major concern. We're more concerned about other issues, such as industrialization, employment, defense, pensions or security.” So, this first stage is straightforward denial. After people become familiar with the topic, they then move to the next stage, which is delay. They then say “let's form a large committee, a task force of scholars, of people from all over the country to study this matter,” which often takes several years to complete. Well, after the committee meets for several years they come up with a report, which of course is delayed. As a result, they do nothing because they say the government has changed and the recommendations of the report do not properly reflect the positions of the new government.

In contrast, my suggestion is that we embrace the future challenges. We should embrace what's likely to be taking place in the coming years, namely, a larger population, more migration, urbanization, population aging and so on. In order to embrace these future challenges, I see three important ingredients.

First, bold vision is needed. This morning I am very pleased to have the four Nobel Peace Prize laureates addressing the conference and presenting some of their bold vision on these difficult issues. In addition to bold vision, strong and enlightened leadership is required. Based on my own experience, I have seen many countries demonstrate strong leadership, but all too often it is not enlightened. Government leaders need to be enlightened in order to consider international migration within a broader historical context and to appreciate the many complex dimensions of this phenomenon. And finally, resources are needed; that is, both financial and human resources. Educated people are needed to deal with the many challenges lying ahead.

With those remarks, I would like to thank you for your attention.

## **Mrs. Rigoberta Menchú Tum**

*Guatemala, 1992 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate*

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Honorable members of the presiding table, dear friends:

It is with great enthusiasm that I partake this morning in this International Forum on Migration and Peace. I congratulate and acknowledge the work carried out by each and every one of you regarding the issue at hand. Furthermore, I applaud your determination and dedication in voicing and extolling the plight of our people who have been forced to live in exile. I consider it a great honor, to extend to you a cordial welcome to Guatemala, the land of the Mayans and corn. The highest percentage of Guatemalan migrants or exiles comprises Mayans from the diverse linguistic regions of our country.

In my brief address, I want to pay tribute, above all, to those people who have eked from the migration experience the means to make significant contributions to their children's education, provide them with decent shelter, and improve the conditions of our people in the countryside, while contributing to the economic sustainability and well being of relatives and families living in Guatemala. I would like in particular to honor all those Guatemalans who have made a significant contribution to the progress of this country, and who have done so through the courageous decision of crossing borders, despite having to leave their families behind.

I often find myself saddened during forums such as this one, because I witness scarce participation of the indigenous peoples in these halls, particularly from the Mayans, who constitute the largest group of exiles or migrants from Guatemala. These are the people who are destitute and vulnerable, who have been touched by tragedy, misery, poverty, and hunger, and have been forced to flee these abhorrent conditions under the cloak of invisibility, in the pursuit of a new opportunity and a better life abroad. Alas, these are the people whose voices should be heard, whose testimonies, and life stories should contribute to transforming our collective consciousness.

The solidarity of people who helped me along the way afforded me the opportunity to flee Guatemala as a young girl. Their support enabled me, a survivor of genocide, of massacres, and repression, to cross the border.

Moreover, my suffering emboldened me to denounce these atrocities, to shed light on and raise public awareness about what was happening here to the indigenous people.

What impelled and gave me strength to move on with my mission, and makes me feel like a privileged and successful woman today, was my undivided and active participation in various venues, stages, and platforms. Within these avenues I decried injustices, spoke of the racism I encountered, and conveyed the life experiences of a young girl and an adult woman, and not those of a mere statistical figure. Due to all these platforms that enabled me to break the silence and speak out against repression, discrimination, and abuses of power, I have been able to participate in the dream of peace for Guatemala. For these reasons, I suggest we provide these same venues and opportunities to our exiled and migrant brothers and sisters who continue experiencing these same injustices, so they may also enjoy the utmost respect and guarantee of basic human rights.

I ask this Forum not to merely restate the current percentages of exiles or migrants here or there. This statistical data is extremely important. However, equally important is to state what we already know to be the true conditions or situations that have compelled our fellow countrymen and women to abandon their families, land, homes, and culture. I hope this Forum will provide guidance with specific steps that will directly benefit our people.

What sorts of solutions can we provide? One idea has been suggested in this introduction. It is imperative to reorganize the communities. People must feel that peace is essential and that it is deeply related to their daily lives. They must come to understand that the rebuilding of their identities is not merely a matter of theory, but a source of value and respect, which has been all but lost. Those of us who have been victims of exile know that exile entails being divested of our ancestral values, and consequently having to grapple with a different lifestyle. Returning involves rebuilding and beginning one's life anew. This not only implies reconstituting a family life, but having to surmount many obstacles. These obstacles include restoring the cultural and family identity, reestablishing family ties, while being able to convey the reason why the person or persons were absent. Another painful issue to be dealt with is the uprooting from one's community. We witnessed it first hand in Guatemala, when our people returned to appalling conditions. The communities they

had left behind, in many cases, were not given reasons as to why their loved ones had been missing for so long. It is important to take into account this issue of being uprooted from one's community. Nonetheless, it can be worked out within the communities themselves and by means of the information that we can provide and share.

Then, one must also consider the issue of social uprooting. After spending years abroad, reestablishing oneself in a homeland means, having to adapt to working under conditions that are no longer familiar, but quite different from those experienced overseas. Herein lies a source of frustration for a large group of people, a source from which other problems arise. How can we focus on reintegrating people to a new reality? The solution cannot be a one-way street. We must consider the other side: What will those who left Guatemala return to? The present environment is entirely different from what they left behind. These men and women are victims of a forced transition. This information is not disclosed to the population.

I would like to suggest we ponder the following: How can we bring about steps that will clearly establish the duties of the government and the current administration toward migration? What are the specific policies upheld by our State Department in regards to migration? In what ways can these policies be enhanced to afford people the necessary tools to empower themselves to become champions of these public policies? The goodwill of a government that states "They want to support migrants" will not suffice. It is necessary to determine, redefine, and clearly state those ideas which the government can support. And that is impossible to do, if these decisions are made in the absence of those who are most affected.

Another important issue to consider is the national and international legal and judicial systems. Simply stated, the migrant's identity is associated with the term "illegal." The expression "*los ilegales*" encompasses the migrant experience, how they are perceived, and the manner in which they lead their lives. This situation cannot be changed unless a legal watershed concerning their rights is instilled in these populations.

Finally, I believe that the most important task at hand is to restore a code of ethics and values, a code of solidarity and cooperation, which does not result in the mistake alluded to earlier: that which would allow those who are absent and inhabit the fringes of our society, who suffer

discrimination and remain invisible to us because they have no economic power, and who are estranged from their land in their pursuit for survival, to continue to live in exile. When we endeavor to empower the absent, and become ourselves mirrors of their absence, we realize the need to forge an effective leadership. Nonetheless, an effective leadership is not simply one that is born of opportunity, but a constitution of entities that can become not only a framework for the legal defense of migrants, but also a means to exercise the rights to which migrants are entitled. In this sense, I feel that what is most relevant is to achieve goals whose impact goes beyond mere analysis, and which may bring to the forefront those who are most directly affected, who precisely happen to be the migrants themselves.

I have many stories to tell. Some are drawn from events I witnessed in the United States, where I encountered people who had an electronic device attached to their ankle and had to live and walk around with it, so that *la Migra* could track their every move. The women who wore these devices were unable to don skirts and resorted to wearing pants, in order to hide these gadgets. Aren't these the same type of devices used for tracking dolphins to determine their patterns of movement in the ocean? Aren't they meant for animals, not humans?

This type of treatment should be condemned; it should be chastised. But who will chastise it? This is precisely the issue at hand. I am here on behalf of the foundation that bears my name. We have devoted ourselves to the tasks of carrying out exhumations and seeking compensation for victims of armed conflicts. We know that many of our people are victims, pawns even, of genocide. However, they were never considered political refugees, but simply classified as *ilegales*. Because of this, I don't regard the issue of migration and peace as a mere end product whose quality should be our concern. No, what we are talking about is men, women, children, and the elderly. We are talking about entire communities, and about an essential part of humankind. Long live our ancestral values! Let us foster solidarity and union, whether it is to help five, three, one single person or just people in general. Let us prepare cases that establish precedents and become paradigms. Let us raise our voices against these injustices. Let us not be shy or ashamed to criticize public policies. Let us not be complacent, because that does not befit the measure of a migrant's dignity, and it is incumbent on us to be straightforward.

I congratulate Most Rev. Alvaro Ramazzini of Saint Mark, whom I

greatly admire and respect. He told us in very simple terms what we seldom dare say, when he said no to racism, no to authoritarianism, and no to inequality. Let's get to the root of the issues and have them be known, so that after this Forum there may be thousands upon thousands who find themselves outraged. Because if people do not become angry, then our efforts will have been fruitless. I wish you much success in this Forum.

Thank you.

## **Mr. Giorgio Negro**

*Deputy Head of Operations for Latin America and the Caribbean*

**International Committee of the Red Cross**

*1917, 1944 and 1963 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate*

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Ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), I would like to express that it is a great honor and an immense satisfaction to be in this beautiful city, as a guest of the *Scalabrini International Migration Network* (SIMN), and to participate in the First International Forum on Migration and Peace.

The ICRC considers it of utmost importance to be able to speak about the issue of migration, which is one of the most pressing issues for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. As a matter of fact, at the outset of the 30<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent held in 2007, it was determined that the humanitarian consequences of international migrations are one of the greatest challenges faced by the modern world.

Although this problem hinges on a country's national sovereignty, the delegates became aware of the need to arrive at a common ground within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in order to enhance the protection and assistance afforded people adversely affected by migration.

Figures show that a growing number of people find it necessary to abandon their homes, due to issues related to safety, economic stability, and other social and environmental factors. In many cases the experiences of those who decide to emigrate clearly show that the humanitarian consequences of migration can be very dire.

Throughout the displacement process, migrants, and particularly those without documents, face such hardships as being relegated to the fringes of society, being excluded, and having to face discrimination. All of this puts them at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking, sexual exploitation, violence, and even abuse by government officials.

This phenomenon we call migration comprises various types of

population movements. It is important to point out the differences between migrants and other vulnerable groups who nevertheless enjoy various resources for the protection of their human rights. Thus, there is a clear difference between migrants, refugees, and those displaced internally within a country.

Establishing these differences is essential in order to enable the enforcement of those protective provisions which target very specific vulnerabilities. For instance, refugees are subject to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and their protection and assistance are provided by the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Let us talk now about those who are displaced internally; in other words, people who because of an armed conflict have been forced to move to other places within the borders of their own country, leaving behind their land, their properties, and their environment. They are not subject to any specific convention of international law. However, within the framework of an armed conflict or other situations of violence, and to the extent that they do not partake in those hostilities, they enjoy protection under International Humanitarian Law, which is extensive to the civil population in general.

Now, the international community, through the Geneva Convention and its protocols, has entrusted the ICRC with a special mandate. This mandate bestows upon the ICRC the task of advocating for International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and ensuring that it is upheld during armed conflicts. It also confers upon the ICRC the right to offer its services in order to assist the victims of armed violence, within the framework of neutral, impartial, and solely humanitarian actions.

Because of this, the ICRC, acting as a watchdog for IHL, has placed, over the course of many years, the issue of internally displaced refugees at the core of its institutional priorities, seeking to draw attention to their vulnerability during armed conflicts. In Colombia, for example, the ICRC has been assisting internally displaced refugees for over ten years.

Colombia, second only to Sudan, is among the countries with the largest internally displaced populations. The crisis of displaced people in Colombia is among the most serious in the world. It affects mostly and in disproportionate numbers, the Afro-Colombians and indigenous populations, who constitute some of the poorest inhabitants in the country.

The violence, according to data gleaned by the NGO Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (CHRD), has displaced more than four million Colombians since 1985. In turn, the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation (known simply as “*Acción Social*”) has included in the National Registry of Displaced Populations approximately 2,800,000 persons, thus enabling them to access institutional aid through the National System for Comprehensive Aid to Displaced Populations.

Despite policies and efforts by the Colombian government, the ICRC has had to offer support, for over a decade, to the displaced population, through its Humanitarian Assistance Program. It has worked alongside the Colombian Red Cross since 2003, and has enhanced its presence in the country, which has enabled the ICRC to provide humanitarian emergency support to large numbers of displaced people. We have garnered many lessons throughout this process, and have focused on new challenges and goals. Moreover, our current work is directed to the development of multiple tasks, given that the forced displacement of people persists.

ICRC's priority is to meet the needs of the displaced population and to search for means or resources to protect them. Logistics is a challenge, as well as providing aid to vulnerable populations in supported communities, which are not immune to the humanitarian consequences of the conflict.

Through its assistance program, the ICRC in Colombia has distributed a total of four (4) million packaged meals, benefiting more than one million displaced persons, 53 percent of whom are under the age of 18.

It is important to point out that many Colombians seek protection in neighboring countries due to the conflict, as is the case with the population of the state of Chocó, which has been forced to cross the border into Panama in search of a safe haven. This population does not enjoy refugee status; therefore, it finds itself in a legal limbo, which may have an impact on its protection.

In this case, the Red Cross of Panama, along with the economic support and underpinning of the ICRC, has been providing humanitarian assistance to this population. This aid includes, among many other things, health related services as well as reestablishment of family bonds. Cases such as this one occur in different circumstances and contexts worldwide. It is in these particular situations that the ICRC and the national associations of

the Red Cross and Red Crescent may contribute to a great extent to easing the suffering of victims of armed conflict, regardless of their status, and focusing solely on their vulnerability and its humanitarian implications.

The ICRC, as well as other humanitarian organizations, regards migrants as human beings who are in a position of extreme vulnerability, due precisely to this condition of being displaced from their known place of residency, and forced into another one which is unknown to them and may be hostile. Therefore, and restating the thoughts expressed in the 30<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Movement concerning the means by which to meet the challenges arising from the phenomenon of migration, the ICRC considers and assesses humanitarian activities that may benefit migrant populations who may not necessarily be victims of armed conflicts.

Mexico is a clear example that underscores this issue. Many people arrive there from various Central American countries, with the intention of crossing the border over to the United States. These people encounter extreme danger, and in some instances suffer serious injuries requiring limb amputations. In these cases, the ICRC lends its support to the national associations of the Red Cross of Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, and El Salvador, in order to facilitate the migrants' return to their home countries.

It could be said that, as a result of its mandate, the ICRC cannot elude its ethical duties of maintaining close ties with those populations affected by global crises, which in turn have dire humanitarian consequences.

Therefore, the challenge for the ICRC is the ensuing protection of victims of armed conflicts and, at the same time, providing resources for humanitarian assistance amidst violent situations, which could emerge during times of peace.

Thank you very much.

## **Mrs. Wendy Batson**

*Executive Director, Handicap International*

*1997 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate*

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I would like to thank the *Scalabrini International Migration Network* (SIMN) for inviting Handicap International to participate in this First International Forum on Migration and Peace. I want to say that Handicap International, although we do have programs here in Central America and in Colombia, is overwhelmingly based in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Asia and southeastern Europe, and my remarks today are going to be primarily based on those experiences.

More than twenty years ago, thousands of destitute, sick and wounded Cambodians fled across the Thai-Cambodia border, which was heavily mined, to take sanctuary in refugee camps. Three young French staff of Doctors without Borders, assigned to provide basic medical care, found thousands of landmine and gunshot victims living among the general population. Saved by surgery and basic emergency medical care, they were then forgotten among the hundreds of thousands of refugees spread out in sprawling makeshift camps, and initiatives to meet their specific needs were totally nonexistent. Nothing in their training had prepared these young doctors to help what over time has become an estimated 35,000 amputees, one out of 350 kilometers.

Handicap International, born of that crisis in 1982, now works in some sixty post-conflict or low-income countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and southeast Europe. Historically, Handicap International is part of the “sans frontières, without borders movement”, which is composed of associations whose chosen mandate is to intervene in the most inaccessible zones even in the midst of a conflict, asserting the principle that access to people in need is a humanitarian necessity and access should be guaranteed.

Today our staff work with local partners to provide crucial assistance programs to men, women and children disabled by armed conflict, diseases like polio or HIV/AIDS, natural disasters and poverty. Many of the people we work with are refugees or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) fleeing conflict or migrants displaced by changing economic

conditions and now often found living in large urban ghettos in destitute conditions.

We now work at the local level with the individual and his or her family to ensure access to health services, education and employment; at the village level to change attitudes about the inclusion of people with disabilities; at the national level to help people learn to develop and implement policies that open opportunity to all citizens; and at the international level to stop the use of indiscriminate weapons that continue to wound years after conflicts end, and assist local disabled peoples' organizations to learn to advocate with local power brokers for enactment and enforcement of policies that will open the door for inclusive development. But we, like many humanitarian agencies, did not always do so and had to learn through experience why collaborative action at each of these levels is imperative if the movement of peoples is to be a bridge and not an obstacle to peace and reconciliation.

There is much to be learned from the experience of working with persons with disabilities caught in emergencies, during both the crisis stage and the return and reintegration into home communities. All humanitarian crises, natural disasters and conflicts will include persons with disabilities. Conflict situations also generate serious injuries and trauma, some of which will become permanent. Yet our experience has shown us over and over again that Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) are more likely than others to be excluded all along the continuum of emergency assistance to development. When displaced, persons with disabilities and injuries may worsen because of lack of appropriate care and services and because of the additional barriers they often face in accessing emergency support. Furthermore, they are often more vulnerable to physical, sexual and emotional abuse. During a crisis, changes in their environment can dramatically limit the mobility and visibility of people with disabilities and their capacities and skills to help themselves often remain largely overlooked by relief stakeholders.

Why is this so? Even experienced relief workers tend to think PwDs have died during natural disasters or conflicts because they could not escape or find shelter. Donors think that global relief measures cover basic needs for all and that response to the specific needs of persons with disabilities can be postponed to the post-emergency period, often with disastrous consequences for the newly injured. Disability issues are usually thought to require highly specialized expertise, costly infrastructure and

complicated programs. For all these reasons, global emergency actors do not take the necessary steps to make their assistance accessible. Persons with disabilities are not taken into account in an appropriate and timely fashion and thus are deprived of the humanitarian aid to which they are entitled.

But steps can be taken that lead to inclusion and participation and the mitigation of the worst that can happen to persons with disabilities. Handicap International and other organizations can and do set up identification and monitoring mechanisms that help track persons with disabilities. We involve persons with disabilities in needs assessments and in the design of response modalities to emergencies. We establish protection measures and early links with caregivers and families. We work with UNHCR and other NGOs to build in accessibility in the organization of basic services and infrastructure including food distribution, community facilities, water and sanitation. All must also be built upon the universal recognition of the right of safe return and on having in place the conditions for successful reconciliation once that return takes place.

Reconciliation and peace-building processes open the door for refugees and IDPs to go back home but if reconciliation is to have any chance for success it requires that specific support structures be put in place. The challenges can be forbidding: among others, the absorptive capacity of the public health system often must be strengthened to cope with returnees and particular attention has to be paid to imported plagues like HIV/AIDS, which can become as divisive as the creation of zones of extreme poverty or, at the other end of the spectrum, the excessive wealth of returnees in contrast with those who stayed behind. Equity in resource allocation is crucial along all stages of the emergency movement of people, from refugee to return and reconciliation.

Special attention must be paid to the most vulnerable communities among the larger diasporas, and close attention must be paid to the continuity of care. In the early 1990s, when refugee return to Cambodia became possible under UNTAC supervision, Handicap International organized a special convoy from the border for more than a hundred tetra and paraplegics after first working with local partners to build the first center to treat such conditions in western Cambodia.

Do not assume that war victims, refugees and IDPs sit on the statistical far edge of migration, outliers to the more familiar stories of

economic migrants. Many of us in this room have sat through meetings trying to work out categorizations to correctly label the people we are tasked with helping (are they refugees or asylum seekers or economic migrants?), which leads to distinctions between what is needed, versus deserved, versus permitted under national and international law, custom and so forth.

But we all also know that many of these distinctions blur in the field. All refugees are to some extent economic migrants or soon become so out of necessity, and I would argue that economic migrants are often to some extent refugees in the broadest definition when they are driven from their villages by conditions often beyond their control. Who can accurately parse choice from coercion in the difficult situations in which many of the people who migrate find themselves? If your family goes on the move because they cannot eat, does it matter all that much if the cause is civil conflict, natural disaster or endemic poverty?

We have learned much in the intervening 25 years about how to work together effectively with our constituency of refugees, IDPs, and persons with disabilities, most of whom are poor and marginalized and live in developing countries, but do those lessons have any relevance for the truly global issue of international migration? My own country of the United States is engaged once again in a sharp, often divisive argument about the place for immigrants within our already large and diverse population. I can see the effects of global migration all about me: the newsletter published at my children's high school comes out in four languages (English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Amharic). The generally live-and-let-live attitudes of the local high school contrast sharply with the frantic and often hostile push-back against immigrants in counties in Virginia and Maryland just a few miles from my home. At first glance, the war victims and other persons with disabilities usually found in the world's poorest countries seem a small subset of the some 200 million people the UN believes have left home, and the problems of the urban migrant in America seem much removed with those confronting a displaced Congolese somewhere on the border of Congo and the DRC.

But on closer reflection, I begin to see links between these disparate communities of the displaced. The explicit needs expressed by persons with disabilities in very poor countries are achingly familiar: concern about earning a living and caring for a family is often far more powerful than

children to go to school and get an education; they want to participate in the social life of their town or village, in short, to lead productive lives embedded in community. No different than the desires expressed by migrant farm workers, urban displaced or, for that matter, all of us.

It's hard to imagine a constituency more embattled/less empowered than war victims or other persons with disabilities who have been forced to become refugees, IDPs or economic migrants. Poverty is often the key factor in leading to disability:

- World Health Organization estimates that there is a global population of 600 million disabled people and that 75 percent live in the developing world;
- One in every four families living in poverty has a disabled family member;
- Poverty is a defining factor in increasing the vulnerability of people to injury or death from mines or UXO; and
- 50 percent of disabilities are preventable and directly linked to poverty.

Yet, members of this much disenfranchised group have participated in two of the great international movements for change in the past decade: the campaign to ban landmines and the convention for the rights of persons with disabilities.

We learned over the years the critical importance of working at every level of the social and political continuum if reconciliation and inclusive integration is to be made possible. When we talk at this Forum about how to establish a network in support of peaceful coexistence between migrant communities and local communities we are in fact also describing an ideal support system for refugees/IDPs in complex emergencies.

This continuum of action is exemplified by our experience in Mozambique. At the end of a long and very destructive war that involved both international and national players and massive displacement among the civilian population, Handicap International was among those organizations tasked with assisting war victims from all sides of the conflict. After long negotiations, we entered into partnership with ADEMO and ADEMINO, the two official Disabled Persons Organizations at that time, each of which was linked to one of the two sides in the civil war. Both agreed to collaborate with Handicap International staff nationally to care for the soldiers and

rehabilitation centers to provide orthopedic care, and we worked with newly appointed government officials to write curriculum and train local technicians to run the centers. Mine-risk education and mine/UXO clearance operations were launched by Handicap International, Norwegian Peoples Aid and Halo Trust, among others, to ensure safe return. And, ultimately, ADEMO and ADEMIMO, setting aside years of hostility, helped Handicap International gather 200,000 signatures from their fellow citizens asking their government of the time to join and sign the International Treaty to ban landmines, which Handicap International presented to international officials at the Ottawa treaty convention in 1997.

Much has been written about the movement to ban land mines, but I think it is worth mentioning here again because it still seems to me a glorious example of civil society actors moving from the particular to the universal. NGOs like Handicap International and ICRC worked with individual landmine victims and their families for years before a growing consensus emerged that it was a moral imperative to move upstream and stop the use of the weapon rather than be content to build systems to help its victims. This weapon in particular is one that primarily affected poor countries and was one of the contributing factors to the forced migration of thousands of people in Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique, Cambodia, and the Balkans, among others. The campaign pulled in an international cohort of activists coming from every level of society, including many from the very villages most affected. And it worked, even those powerful countries that did not sign, including the United States and China, have followed the ban, and landmine casualties have dropped dramatically since the 1980s.

Over the past two decades, many humanitarian aid agencies have moved from a one-on-one relationship of server, to a complex network of relationships involving many actors, not the least of which are the people we first set out to help. Handicap International staff develops projects and carries out political action so that, by improving their living conditions and increasing their social participation, people in disabling situations may recover their capacity to act. Handicap International's aim is to increase peoples' capacities to satisfy their own basic needs and exercise their fundamental rights, and in manner that does not lead to further conflict but to reconciliation.

When we ask whether international migration is an obstacle or bridge to peace, I think we must immediately answer "It depends!" All

migrations, even those that end well, are in the beginning inherently destabilizing. But that destabilization can result in new ways of living that are a great improvement over the old ones. Most of us much prefer a world without landmines in it! The answer to whether it is obstacle or bridge always hangs in precarious balance because it depends on a complex web of possibilities that may range from the crucial, but mundane (“is there money and can it be effectively and intelligently deployed?”) to the imponderables of the human heart in its infinite capacity to respond with cruelty and indifference or compassion and love to the disasters that befall others.

One of those young French doctors I mentioned in my first sentence was Jean Baptiste Richardier, one of the founders of Handicap International. He has many times noted that he and his colleagues remain deeply marked for life by the survival strategies those Cambodian refugees with disabilities and their close relatives displayed when confronted with deprivation and the absence of specific assistance. Inspired by their generosity and individual courage in a time of crisis, they taught many of us that families never give up and rarely abandon those among them who are the most fragile. With admirable and breathtaking obstinacy, they keep trying to look after those they love, seeking concrete solutions to make their situation better. We can, each and every one of us, try to emulate them by providing what assistance we have in us to offer.

Thank you.

## **Dr. Aitor Zabalgogeoazkoa**

*General Director of Spain Section*

**Doctors Without Borders, 1999 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate**

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### **“You Cannot Gate an Open Field” Populations in Movement: a Humanitarian Challenge<sup>1</sup>**

Thank you for inviting us to participate in this International Forum on Immigration and Peace. A special thanks to the volunteers and missionaries of the *Scalabrini International Migration Network* (SIMN), whose extraordinary work helping immigrants is well known to us. There are more experienced voices besides Doctors Without Borders (DWB) at this Forum who could speak about immigration. Even so, I hope that our calling to overcome frontiers in order to bring medical and humanitarian assistance to all human beings who suffer from precarious conditions, and who are victims of natural or man-made disasters or armed conflicts, could offer a useful perspective within the framework of this debate.

Migration is not a new phenomenon. It is part of the history of mankind. Why has it become important from the limited humanitarian perspective? Historically, it has been a positive phenomenon for those who migrate and for those who received them. It is true that immigration makes us all wealthier while at the same time it fights human misery. In a recent issue of *The Economist*, an article written by Legrain stated that to stop immigration is morally corrupt and economically stupid.<sup>2</sup>

I would like to focus my presentation, first of all, not on the causes of migration, since we do not deal with that directly as part of our medical humanitarian action, but rather on the consequences of migration. Secondly, I would like to focus on the moment that appears to us most critical in the migratory process, that is, the process itself, mobility as such.

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<sup>1</sup> This presentation is based on an internal paper produced by Carme Tapiés of the Humanitarian Affairs Unit of DWB OCBA.

<sup>2</sup> “Open Up,” *The Economist*, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009.

## **Definition**

An aspect worth mentioning is the language we use, precisely the word “migrant.” This word has been accepted by the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language; so perhaps we are able to start shifting categories and their implications. We often use the expression “displaced populations” or “populations in movement” in order to avoid categorization into “migrants,” “internally displaced,” and “eco-environmental refugees,” etc., as they are sometimes called today. We believe that to talk about “populations in movement” or “displaced populations” encompasses the whole spectrum. This is a way to skip the classifications linked to the causes, which define them in a restrictive way, justifying only some reasons and not others.

Therefore, we prefer to call those who migrate, “populations in movement.” Moreover, we will not forget that at the time of their movement is when these people are most vulnerable. “Populations in movement” has been the traditional focus of our endeavor. Given that DWB works in the countries of origin, transit, and destination of these populations, our organization has plenty of experience in assisting these refugees and internally displaced people.

## **Consequences**

Therefore, allow me to speak about the effects and impact on the individuals and not the causes that make people migrate. As I told you before, we believe that these people are most vulnerable during the migratory movement per se. It is during this transit when people go through critical and vital moments; and taking into consideration the dimensions of the phenomenon, we can consider it a humanitarian crisis. This is when we interact, given the characteristics of our medical and humanitarian endeavor, and it is why we are able to render an opinion about this issue. During these days, we will certainly have testimonies of colleagues, missionaries, volunteers, and social entities that will share stories of these crucial moments. We, DWB, are experiencing these moments at the borders that separate Europe from Africa and Asia from Africa. This is perhaps not as pervasive in the Americas, but I believe that the situations are similar. The living conditions of displaced people are similar.

I would like to share the following concerns:

- **First, there are more migrants everyday and it is a global phenomenon: the magnitude of the phenomenon is difficult to gauge**

The extent of the migration phenomenon is difficult to quantify. It is estimated that there are some 191 million migrants, approximately 3 percent of the world population. Thirty to 40 million of them are considered “undocumented migrants,” inappropriately called “illegal.” Half of them are women. Some 24.5 million are internally displaced within their country of origin and 9.9 million are refugees. However, I would like to avoid emphasizing figures. Immigrants are people and we should make an effort not to reduce them to statistics. Focusing only on figures makes it easier to ignore them and abandon them to their own fate. Moreover, the vast scope of the phenomenon could end up paralyzing us.

At the same time, this is a global phenomenon. The migration receptor “poles” are not the traditional ones or the more obvious, such as Europe, the United States, or Australia, but the movement extends to countries like India and South Africa. In general, Latin America is a sending region, with some exceptions like Costa Rica, Chile, and Uruguay.

Moreover, it is a phenomenon that is getting more complicated as people are forced to migrate due to security, economic, and environmental reasons. There is a part of the displacement or movement of people that is unpredictable, as much as the effects of conflicts, environmental degradation, and increasing urbanization too are unpredictable. To illustrate this unpredictability, we might remember that before the U.S. intervention in Iraq in 2003, it was predicted that the intervention would have a sizable impact on the displacement of people, but that did not happen at the time. Yet today, five years later, no less than three million Iraqis are refugees or internally displaced.

- **Second, we are witnessing an increase in the vulnerability of these populations in movement, to unimaginable extremes**

The unfolding of the migration phenomenon outside the legal framework means that today thousands of people find themselves in situations of high vulnerability, and this is reaching a critical level. Some of the characteristics of that vulnerability are:

- The subhuman living conditions during the trip, at the arrival, in transit centers, or in detention centers.

- Suffering due to physical abuse, racial harassment, theft, extortion.
- Becoming victims of human trafficking or brutal mafias.

All of this has serious implications on people's health. Illness lurks permanently in these people in the way of traumatic wounds, infections, infectious diseases, untreated chronic illness, stress, mental traumas, and sexual violence. It also has typical impacts on public health. Just to mention some examples: dengue and schistosomiasis are a problem in Brazil; Chagas disease in the United States and Spain; malaria is spreading beyond its limits; HIV and its relation with the sex trade; and the outbreaks of exotic diseases such as Chikungunya disease in Italy. We are seeing ever more often the spread of infectious diseases that we must, above all, examine and fight against. At the same time, we also need to fight to make sure migrants are not criminalized or blamed as being the cause of these diseases, because they are not responsible for them.

We must also mention that there are groups that are more vulnerable within the vulnerability spectrum suffered by immigrants; that is: families, women, children, and minors without supervision, who become easy victims of abuse and human trafficking.

- **Third, it is a confirmed fact that heightened security measures in the migration corridor make vulnerability even more acute**

Migration routes become more complicated. Destination countries become inaccessible fortresses, and as a result, in order to reach their objective, migrants must explore new routes. The migratory journey becomes more dangerous; the underground becomes a breeding ground for mafias and human trafficking. Migrants find themselves exposed to increasing risks and situations of violence of various kinds, inhumane living conditions and, ultimately, possible death.

Nonetheless, it is impossible to measure the magnitude of the tragedy and to learn, for instance, the number of people who die along the migratory journey. Just to have an idea, it is enough to mention that there are data indicating that at least 12,000 people have died attempting to enter Europe. A minimum of 8,300 of them have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea and some 1,600 have perished of thirst crossing the Sahara desert. How many people die during their journey from South and Central American countries on their way to North America?

Another consequence of shielding the borders is the increasing number of people whose migratory journey is interrupted and they find themselves trapped and forced to remain in countries of “transit” over long periods of time, often years, living in conditions of extreme vulnerability and becoming victims of violence.

• **Fourth, migrants are invisible, excluded; they are “no one’s” responsibility**

Often, migration is perceived purely as an economically motivated phenomenon; however, today thousands of people are forced to leave their homes for a variety of reasons. For instance, as we all know, in Latin America, having left behind the armed conflicts of the 1980s and 90s (with the exception of Colombia), the causes are economic, environmental (thousands of Hondurans emigrated after Hurricane Mitch), and also due to security concerns such as organized criminal violence (as in the north of Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, or Brazil). Each time, it becomes more difficult to distinguish among those who are fleeing from a conflict or persecution and those who are forced to emigrate for other reasons such as the destruction of the economic and social structures necessary to survive. Wars initially beget movements of people who at the beginning are considered refugees, but end up being classified as migrants. To show some data, let me mention that in 2007 there were 26 million people displaced as a consequence of situations of violations of human rights, 15 million due to the effects of big development projects, and 143 million displaced by several environmental phenomena.

Currently, immigrants are excluded from “traditional protection mechanisms.” We are seeing an increased restriction to granting recognition of refugee status to people who are fleeing zones of conflict. International legal instruments currently in force, such as the International Refugee Statute of 1951, are overwhelmed by reality and fail to specifically provide for all of these situations. States are limiting more and more the right of asylum and are even hindering the movement of refugees. Along these lines, we find examples such as the 2001 U.S. intervention in Afghanistan and the 2009 Israeli intervention in Gaza, where populations were prevented from fleeing, moving, or taking refuge. On the other hand, people who are forced to flee because of other reasons (the so-called “forced migrants”) do not enjoy any international protection. In this context, we must point out

that criminal and organized violence is an important cause of forced displacement in Central America.

A paradigmatic example is that of the children born during the migration journey to mothers who are often victims of human trafficking and sexual violence. These children are stateless, they do not belong anywhere, and they are not allowed to be registered. In sum, they do not exist.

• **Finally, migrants become stigmatized, discriminated against, or criminalized in both transit and “receiving” societies and States**

Destination countries are passing ever more restrictive laws, limiting asylum rights, and denying the most basic rights such as healthcare. The collapsed of immigration reform in the United States, in June 2007, and the economic downturn could produce even more pressure on the phenomenon in America. These legislative changes are accompanied by practices such as increasing police and military control and more than precarious receiving conditions. Moreover, once inside the “fortress” they are persecuted and forced underground. They are “second class” or “invisible” citizens with no rights.

Inside “democratic” states, sub-territories are created outside the legal framework (such as detention centers). On this subject, I would like to recall specific experiences in Yemen, Italy, and Greece, where DWB carries out assistance programs. I suggest you take a look at the report entitled “*Without Any Other Option*” about the situation of Somali and Ethiopian refugees, asylum applicants, and immigrants who cross the Gulf of Aden into Yemen.

At the same time, the so-called “destination” states subordinate trade and institutional agreements to foreign controls, a practice known as “externalization of borders.” “Democratic” states delegate border control to neighboring states. Thus, states such as Mexico, Algeria, or Turkey receive funds in exchange for behaving as “bad cop,” laundering the consciences of well-off Western societies.<sup>3</sup> Civil society in receiving countries is exposed to xenophobic propaganda and fear mongering in the media, on behalf of political and commercial interests of all kinds, acting as enemies of peace

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<sup>3</sup> The 60 million Europeans who migrated to America during the 20<sup>th</sup> century expected to double their income. Those who migrate now expect to increase it fivefold.

and integration. Is it not a paradigmatic example that there are as many Mexican immigrants in the world as there are British (5.5 million of each), and yet the former are portrayed as a problem while the latter are not?

Administrative matters such as having papers or not, having a work permit or not, all of a sudden are linked to “granting”, or not, the basic rights of every human being, such as the simple right to exist. There are no human rights for clandestine immigrants. And without any rights, the conflict remains. Thus, for instance, in Italy a new proposal has been introduced requiring physicians to report undocumented patients, while in France a controversy has erupted because a teacher has denounced a child whose parents were undocumented. The conflict is served from the moment immigrants in situations of high vulnerability do not have any recognized rights or a voice to claim them. They do not exist as citizens. They have been placed outside the law, while the inapplicability of the most basic human rights is justified with aberrant arguments.

Suspicion and fear are imposed over peace and social cohesion. We cannot talk about democracy and the rule of law when there are States where more than 20 percent of the population is underground and without any rights. We need to shift the immigration debate away from the security agenda and couch it in the economic and social reality.

### **What, Then, is the Answer from a Humanitarian Perspective?**

Like the legal and human rights perspectives, the humanitarian approach to immigration is a challenge. It is a problem for which there isn't a user's manual. Immigration is a challenge. The challenge consists in providing assistance while speaking out and calling attention to the extreme situations that we are witnessing.

One of the characteristics of current migratory flows is that they blur the borders of the origin, transit, and destination countries of migrants. As aid organizations, we have before us the challenge of learning to maximize our presence in these countries in order to improve the assistance we provide. Unfortunately, when we talk about helping migrants, we are talking about the most elementary level of humanitarian care. We are talking about helping them regain their dignity as people and being recognized as human beings. We are talking about returning to them their humanity and helping them survive in order to be recognized and treated as human beings.

Currently, most DWB programs oriented to this kinds of people take place in Europe, Africa, and Asia; specifically Italy, Greece, Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, Yemen, Somalia, Thailand, India, and Mexico. DWB is also considering the possibility of getting involved in assisting migrants at the borders of Mexico and Guatemala.<sup>4</sup> We believe that we have good experience and examples in Spain and Morocco, where our assistance was strategically and primarily oriented to taking care and saving the lives of those affected, but also intent on having society and authorities recognize and take stock in the problem as well.

The priorities are:

- Providing aid and emergency medical care,
- Basic medical care and referrals to hospital systems,
- Working within a network to facilitate their legal and social protection.

As in all humanitarian crises, the challenge for all aid organizations is how to provide the best solutions within the limits of their capabilities. Today we try to assist in some key places along the migratory routes of our planet. But, above all, we have the will not to remain silent given the difficult dimensions of coping with this drama. Our programs, aside from assisting a few people, must have an aggregate value. Meaning: taking care of them during these critical moments in their lives and also learning lessons that will help to change these situations.

In the meantime, we continue offering help, medical care, and we favor all actions that seek to provide social and legal protection. We continue providing aid to the best of our abilities and capacities, and will continue to bear witness, while other agents, some of them present at this Forum, through concerted political action can make progress on the judicial and legal frameworks and press for changes in both policy and mentality.

Thank you.

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<sup>4</sup> See the Exploratory Mission's report *Southern Border: The Weakest Link*, 2008.

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