



BORDERS: WALLS OR BRIDGES?

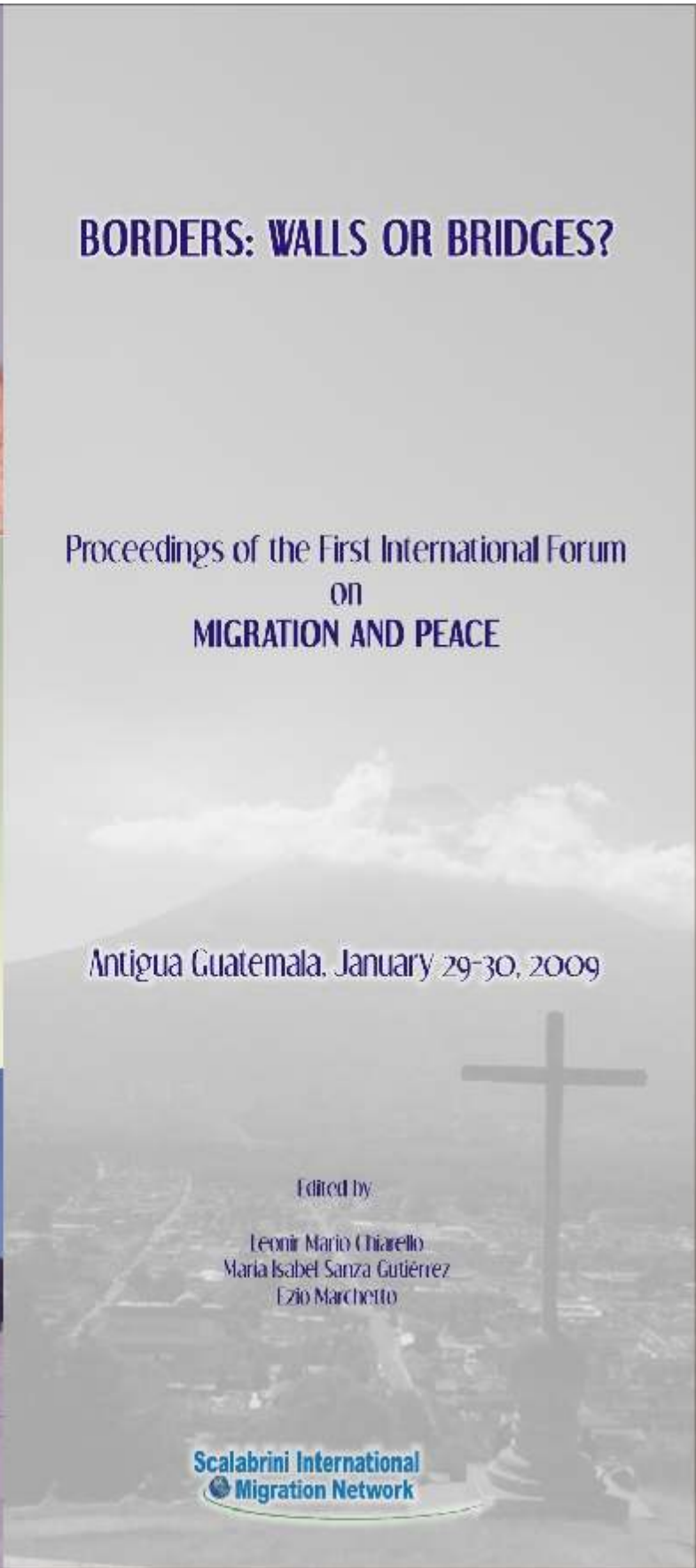
Proceedings of the First International Forum
ON
MIGRATION AND PEACE

Antigua Guatemala, January 29-30, 2009

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Scalabrini International
Migration Network



DECLARATION OF ANTIGUA

At the First International Forum on Migration and Peace

In the city of Antigua, Guatemala, on January 29 - 30, 2009

CONVENED BY

the *Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN)*:

A federation of over 270 non-governmental organizations committed to the protection of the human rights of people on the move, and the promotion of a culture of peaceful coexistence between migrants and local communities. The role of SIMN is that of a mediator for the establishment of a more interconnected society, through its social and Christian commitment, prioritizing the most vulnerable people within the phenomenon of human mobility;

WITH THE SUPPORT OF:

The Guatemalan Conference of Bishops and the sponsorship, among others, of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Cassamarca Foundation, TROCAIRE, the Soros Foundation-Guatemala, CRS-Guatemala, and 218 participants who attended the *First International Forum on Migration and Peace* representing:

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATES, GOVERNMENTS,
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS,
CHURCHES, ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS, MEDIA, MIGRANTS,
AND PRO-MIGRANT ORGANIZATIONS,

SUMMONED TO A FORUM on
“Borders: Walls or Bridges?”

AWARE OF:

THE conflicts generated by the negative and misguided perception of migration as an element linked to security, the reason behind building new, physical and legal walls;

THE opportunity created by the coexistence of migrants and local communities in the establishment of a society of cultural exchange and mutual enrichment;

THE sustainable development, created by the migrants in the countries of origin, transit and destination;

THE need to recognize the rights of every human being and ensure their safety in their right of movement and in their right of not having to migrate;

THE need to establish and nurture a culture of peace on the borders (geographical and human, political and cultural, individual and collective) to overcome division, racism, discrimination, conflict and poverty and to eliminate human trafficking and human rights violations, in particular violence and abuse against the most vulnerable;

THE desire to develop the full potential of international migration in the construction of a peaceful society and in the conception of borders as bridges, not walls.

CONSIDERING:

THAT migration is a phenomenon inherent to human nature, which has always existed and cannot be contained by restrictive policies or walls;

THAT social instability, inequality, natural disasters, armed conflicts, lack of a political culture of individual and collective responsibility in seeking the common good, and institutional weakness are some of the main causes of migration, both globally and in the Americas;

THAT the current process of globalization, the deepening social inequalities, and the economic imbalances among countries are factors contributing to forced migration, the movement of men, women and children who, because of their extreme poverty and need of a livelihood, are forced to leave their homes and places of origin;

THAT migrants expose such asymmetries and injustices and the need for structural change;

THAT human mobility, traditionally perceived as a significant contribution

to the economies and societies of sending and receiving countries, is currently perceived, by many countries of transit and destination, as a problem;

THAT migrants are all too often viewed as a threat and are subjected to discrimination, rejection and harassment, stemming from xenophobic actions by some segments of society;

THAT this negative perception is caused by the introduction of anti-immigration policies by governments in transit and destination countries, placing the migrants in situations of high vulnerability;

THAT the principles of reciprocity in social exchange are ignored and that each country should apply internally all they require internationally from other countries;

THAT borders, the “no man's land” of displaced people, are the “best place” for dialogue and communication, and contain in themselves the possibility of establishing a “new place” for mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence;

THAT migration policies in sending as well as transit and destination countries are too often not conducive to the creation of bridges of peaceful coexistence;

THAT this lack of consistency requires a redefinition of immigration policies that places at its core the protection of the human rights of all people, particularly the most vulnerable, such as migrants (understood as any person in mobility, be it within or without their country of origin).

DECLARE:

THAT building walls is only the overt and symbolic act of the current immigration policies, characterized by their restrictive principles, and whose real purpose is not to close the avenues of migration, but to create a climate of terror and persecution against undocumented migrants, exposing them to extreme levels of vulnerability and exploitation, which foreshadow new forms of slavery;

THAT in this climate of suspicion, not only are there violations of human, political, economic (including employment), social and cultural rights, but also a denial of the significant and positive contributions migrants make to the host economies and societies;

THAT the countries of origin have become exporters of human capital, thereby jeopardizing, in the long run, their own development, even though migration may lift millions of families out of poverty, thus enhancing opportunities for future generations and providing the possibility of improving their wellbeing;

THAT migrants are actively involved in generating the necessary conditions for sustainable development in their home countries through their remittances, through the demographic changes that migration produces, and by becoming bridges of communication and cultural exchange;

THAT governments in the countries of origin may not use migrants' remittances to exempt themselves from their obligation to implement development policies that reduce the existing imbalances and prevailing social inequalities, and guarantee their people the right not to migrate;

THAT international migration, besides helping the development of the countries of origin, is a contributing factor on all levels for development in the countries of transit and destination;

THAT it is necessary to work for the designation of the border as a new place of enrichment and exchange, and to overcome the notion of multiculturalism with inter-culturalism based on those principles of reciprocity and solidarity which internal and international migrations call for;

THAT the creation of bridges of dignity requires the establishment of tools that enable the development of personal and individual responsibility in the knowledge of their rights and duties, in the trust of the institutions of the sending, transit, and receiving countries, and the recognition of their rights;

THAT this must be accompanied by a renewed concept of citizenship and the building of a greater confidence in the institutional apparatus of sending, transit and receiving countries, strengthening their role as protectors of the rights of all, both local citizens and migrant citizens, announcing the need for change towards the utopia of a universal citizenship;

THAT it is not through walls and anti-immigration policies that we can move towards effective dynamisms for building true bridges between Migration and Peace and develop a peaceful and mutually rewarding existence, but through the establishment of means for the recognition and protection of the rights of every person, like the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members their

Families passed in 1990 by the UN;

THAT although there has been significant progress at the policy level, relating to the protection and defense of migrant rights in the framework of regional and international bodies, the fact is that these conventions have not been ratified or applied by any of the major receiving countries.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES TO:

DIRECT our joint efforts to maximizing the positive impact international migration has on development, both in the sending and receiving countries, calling on them to minimize the negative consequences of migration;

UNIFY our efforts to remove the issue of security from the core of the immigration agenda, and replace it instead with the issue of recognition and protection of all human, political, economic, social and cultural rights, while promoting peaceful coexistence, in recognition of the prime role of migration in the comprehensive development of sending and receiving societies, thus avoiding the criminalization of migrants as a way of regulating immigration flows;

PLACE development at the heart of our joint activities, which means attacking the root causes of forced migration and moving towards:

- Eradication of extreme poverty
- Creation of decent jobs
- Consistent migration policies
- Respect for the free movement of persons
- A commitment to migrants, as both a personal and institutional responsibility
- The adoption of principles of cooperation, solidarity, and fraternity, as guidelines for peaceful coexistence;

PROMOTE activities to eradicate all forms of violence, both institutional and from organized crime, as well as all forms of racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and abuse, in the societies of origin, transit, and destination of migrants, rising above the walls of *altero-fobia* and building the bridges of *altero-filia*;

JOIN FORCES so that countries of destination ratify international conventions and treaties on migration, especially the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and

Members their Families;

RECOGNIZE that migrants are the key players in building bridges of peaceful international coexistence;

CONSIDER the migrant always as the center of every policy, action, law, convention, or project on migration issues.

Antigua, Guatemala, January 29-30, 2009

ORGANIZED BY:

**Scalabrini International
Migration Network**



WITH THE SUPPORT OF:



PASTORAL DE MOVILIDAD HUMANA
CEB



FONDAZIONE CASSAMARCA
Noni, spazio per il dialogo e l'aiuto

