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CONSTRUIRE  
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**Secours Catholique-Caritas France's statement for the European Regional Review of  
the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration on 12th and 13th of  
November 2020**

*November 2020*

As the first European Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is being held, Secours Catholique-Caritas France draws the attention of decision-makers to a context of multiple crises affecting migrant people, who are increasingly vulnerable.

In his latest encyclical Fratelli Tutti, Pope Francis denounces, with regard to migrants, that “we will never say that they are not human beings, but in practice, through decisions and the way they are treated, we show that they are considered as people of less value, less importance, endowed with less humanity”. Face to this unacceptable observation, he reminds us that “the right of every human being to find a place where he can not only meet his basic needs and those of his family, but also fully realize himself as a person must be respected”. He calls finally for the construction of a “global legislation (governance) for migration”.

**A context of multiple crises and exacerbated vulnerabilities**

Although the Global Compact on Migration offers, on paper, substantial supporting points on key issues for the protection of migrant people's rights, there is an important gap between the commitments under the Compact and the reality. Indeed, migrant people, around the world, currently find themselves in the grip of multiple crises, which make them increasingly vulnerable.

First of all, even if the **current sanitary crisis related to COVID-19** affects everyone indiscriminately, it weighs heavily on the vulnerable people who are migrants. On the basis of field analyses in France and in various regions of the world, Secours Catholique-Caritas France would like to warn of the increased vulnerability of migrant people.

In addition to the crisis itself and its sanitary impacts, the policies put in place to respond to the epidemic have exposed migrants to other crises. The vulnerabilities of migrant people have thus been exacerbated by three crises: a **protection crisis**, a **sanitary crisis** and a **socio-economic crisis**.

- From a protection point of view, border closure measures make migratory journeys even more dangerous and greatly undermine access to the right to asylum, protection and decent living conditions.
- From a sanitary point of view, migrant people are particularly vulnerable to coronavirus. They are more exposed because they are in the front line in ensuring essential jobs in our

societies and the housing conditions of many people do not often allow the necessary health measures for their protection to be applied.

- From a socio-economic point of view, migrant people are among the first to lose their jobs, which are often informal. They thus lose their income and they benefit from little or none of the social protection measures. It reinforces the poverty of migrants and their families, who can no longer receive financial support. The economic impact is major because, in some countries, remittances from migrants to their families represent very large amounts, sometimes even higher than the amounts allocated as official development assistance.

At the same time, there is also a **crisis of policies** that too often go against the rights and protection commitments of migrant people. Thus in France, Secours Catholique-Caritas France witnesses, throughout the country and particularly at borders, violations of fundamental rights and a lack of access to basic services for migrant people (access to water, food, hygiene, health care). The situation is the same for many people living in camps and slums on French soil. Moreover, Secours Catholique-Caritas France is deeply worried about measures that voluntarily restrict access to basic services such as the prohibition for certain associations to carry out food distributions in Calais. This prohibition not only undermines access to basic services and the right to solidarity, but it also violates the principle of fraternity.

Secours Catholique is also concerned about the measures proposed by the European Commission in the new European Pact on Migration and Asylum: no reference is made to the Global Compact on Migration, safe and legal pathways of migration are little developed, such is the access to basic services. In this Pact, the emphasis is on the haggling of solidarity between European countries, on returns and on the strengthening of cooperation with third countries to prevent migration to the European Union.

In addition, there is another context that has an equally important impact on migrant people: the **crisis linked to the effects of climate change**. The effects of climate change, disasters and environmental degradation do have an impact on migration. Many people are forced to leave their homes in anticipation of or in response to an environmental risk, whether sudden or slow. Impacted populations then find themselves dispossessed of their land and livelihoods and very often without sufficient financial resources, information on their rights and without safe routes. For people forced to crossborder displacement in this context, **there are no adequate legal responses**. They are not integrated into existing protection mechanisms. As a result, people move under extremely difficult conditions and their fundamental rights are violated.

The crises linked to COVID-19 and more generally this context of multiple crises reveal how the most vulnerable people are the first to be affected in times of crises and therefore have a specific need for protection.

### **Solutions in the Global Compact on Migration but a lack of implementation**

Secours Catholique-Caritas France welcomed the adoption of the Global Compact on Migration as a strong signal for the rights of migrant people, particularly with the reaffirmation of individuals' rights and the need for safe and legal pathways of migration. However, while at the time of signing the

Global Compact civil society organisations encouraged States to use the elements of the Compact as a floor and not as a ceiling, the minimum is still far from being ensured today. To respond to the context of multiple crises and the exacerbated vulnerabilities of migrant people, **we call for a global governance of migration that effectively protects and respects the rights of these populations.**

The crises related to COVID-19 have not stopped migration but have made it more dangerous and have increased the vulnerabilities of migrant people. The sanitary crisis has sometimes even been used by some States to take measures that go against the principle of non-refoulement. **The current context once again demonstrates how essential it is for people to benefit from safe and legal pathways of migration that allow them to move in a way that respects their rights and that protects both their health and those of populations in transit and host countries.**

To this end, **Objective 5** of the Global Compact on Migration, a keystone for the implementation of many of the Compact's Objectives, proposes concrete measures to **develop safe and legal pathways of migration, in respect of human rights, for all migrants, taking into account their needs in terms of protection, work, family life, etc.** However, the development of safe and legal pathways of migration should not be accompanied by the criminalization of irregular migration.

The current context also demonstrates that it is crucial, as expressed in **Objective 15** of the Global Compact, that **access to basic services be guaranteed for all migrants regardless of their status and at all stages of their migration journeys.**

In line with **Objective 2** of the Compact which recognizes the effects of climate change as adverse drivers of migration, Objective 5 of the Global Compact on Migration also proposes measures to address the protection gap for environmental migrants such as humanitarian visas. **Secours Catholique-Caritas France therefore calls on States to engage in national, regional and international discussions in favour of the development of safe, legal, effective and accessible pathways of migration for environmental migrants and of their integration into existing protection mechanisms. These discussions should include reflections on the applicability for environmental migrants of humanitarian visas, temporary or permanent protection status and the principle of non-refoulement.** Moreover, the protection of environmental migrants must also be built through the fight against adverse drivers of migration, including the effects of climate change. In this context, the lack of willingness of some States is particularly noticeable and the significant delays in achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement of 2015 are worrying.

While solutions exist in the Global Compact on Migration, Secours Catholique-Caritas France is worried about policies which go against the rights of migrant people and about the lack of political willingness of some States to concretely implement the Global Compact.

Therefore, the European Regional Review and other regional reviews should be key moments during which States, on one hand, integrate the gaps between the reality of practices and their commitments, and, on the other hand, commit to improve their policies. The first International Migration Review Forum will be held in 2022 and it would be unacceptable that substantial progress has not been made in the implementation of the Global Compact, for the protection of all migrant people.

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