

Input for the HLD, from Emmaus International, founding organization – and on behalf – of the Organization for Universal Citizenship

Action Theme 4 - Migration governance and partnerships

A different approach to migration has today become a necessity: the systems governing migration policy fall essentially within the jurisdiction of individual States and are therefore no longer relevant to 21st century migration realities, which are characterized by globalization. These systems flout what, in our eyes, constitutes a fundamental right outlined in article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

These systems sanction the existence of two-tier mobility: the most privileged countries offer their citizens virtually unrestricted freedom of movement, whereas three quarters of the human race are unable to escape from a form of de facto house arrest. This also results in aberrant administrative processes, requests for inordinate financial guarantees, work situations that are tantamount to slavery and the increasing criminalization of illegal immigration... Migrants today have become victims of arbitrary policy-making and institutional violence, as well as becoming easy prey for criminal networks.

In many Northern countries, we are seeing a resurgence of myths based on fear and xenophobic and racist prejudices. These fuel numerous forms of political intoxication and exploitation; they feed the most reactionary attitudes, dangerously stirring up opposition with fairy tales about invasion, the threat of a loss of national identity and the dangers of a supposedly impossible integration. These prejudices then help to shape the most irrational closed border policies and to justify systematic violations of the fundamental rights accorded to migrants by international treaties and conventions.

Even more seriously, the closure and militarization of borders, in particular in Europe, North America and Australia, have proved lethal for thousands of people for over two decades. Expensive in terms of human lives, this system is also costly to public funds, pouring several hundreds of millions of dollars at a time of crisis on a wasteful policy that is patently ineffective.

We affirm that it is illusory to believe in closing borders and controlling migrant flows in order to prevent those who have lost all hope of a better life from going and trying their luck elsewhere. We are certain that it will not be possible either to prevent those whose living environments have been destroyed by the ecological crisis from seeking to settle in more temperate climates. The numbers of climate-change refugees, estimated currently at over 38 million, could reach 150 million by 2050.

Finally, there is an urgent need to take a calm view of migration as an ordinary social phenomenon, characteristic of the times we live in and the times to come, profoundly linked to the changes taking place at global level of which it is both the cause and the consequence.

We have learnt that humanity has built its history and wealth by means of migration: it would be wrong and a denial of reality to believe that this could be any different in the future.

Thus, we propose an international conference be organized in the framework of the United Nations on the theme of world-wide freedom of movement and settlement as an answer for global migration policy. This must be prepared through a broad consultation of stakeholders.

Emmaus International, on behalf of the Organization for Universal Citizenship.

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