

28th regular session of the Human Rights Council –2 to 27 March 2015
Item 3 –General Debate; Joint Oral Statement

Saving Lives, Putting Solutions Together for Boat People

Co-signed by:

Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII
Augustinians International
Caritas Europa
Caritas Internationalis (International Federation of Catholic Charities)
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
Congregations of St. Joseph
Dominicans for Justice and Peace (Order of Preachers)
Franciscans International
Fundacion Migrantes y Refugiados Sin Fronteras
Human Rights Watch
International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)
International Catholic Child Bureau
International Council of Psychologists
Justice and Peace Netherlands (formerly Stichting Justitia et Pax Nederland)
Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Centre
Marist International Solidarity Foundation
Outreach Social Care Project
Passionists International
PICUM- Platform for International Cooperation for Undocumented Migrants
Poverty Elimination and Community Education (PEACE) Foundation
Save the Children
Save the Climat
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN)
United Methodist Church-General Board of Church and Society

Mr. President,

In the past twenty years, at least 15,000 people have died trying to reach Europe's shores from Africa and the Middle East. Many of those who died were refugees and asylum seekers, women and children, human beings fleeing wars, abject chaos and despair.

The Mediterranean Sea crossing is the world's most deadly, with 3,500 deaths recorded just last year. In one recent incident, more than 300 people drowned with another 29 dying of hypothermia as their rescuers took them to Lampedusa.

Such tragedy was widely predicted a few months ago when Europe failed to pick up its share of the budget and mission of Italy's important Mare Nostrum search and rescue operation. Though Mare Nostrum by itself was not a comprehensive response to the increasing crisis in the Mediterranean, Operation Triton, its replacement, was actually launched with a much smaller mandate and resources.

The International Catholic Migration Commission and Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, within the group of 125 civil society organizations¹ listed on both sides of this statement, ask the European Union and others to urgently effect a real change in migration policies.

The Mediterranean is not only “Mare Nostrum” (our sea); these are “*Fratres Nostri*”: our *brothers and sisters* in these boats and dying. So many deaths can be prevented if Europe would continue Italy’s priority to save lives first—i.e., with real search and rescue. Border enforcement approaches that lack this priority neither protect the fundamental human right to life nor respect international and regional treaties that require protection: for those fleeing persecution, serious human rights violations and torture; for those abused by human traffickers or smugglers; and for children.

Alongside efforts at political solutions and development that address root causes of this migration, wider resettlement, labour migration and humanitarian channels are needed so that people fleeing for survival do not have to seek help from human traffickers and smugglers, suffer so much, and die.

States, international agencies and civil society have collaborated on this before: it is time to re-animate cooperation that offered so much relief a generation ago to boat people in Southeast Asia, including robust resettlement and visas for safe, orderly migration within a Comprehensive Plan of Action. It is also time to fix the Dublin Regulation for greater solidarity, humanity and consistency in providing asylum across Europe. Among other things, asylum seekers should no longer be forced back to the country of first access to ask for asylum.

/Thank you.

¹ **NGOs also supporting this statement:** African and Black Diaspora Global Network on HIV/AIDS (ABDGN), Abiodun Adebayo Welfare Foundation, Afghan Refugees Association in Turkey, African Commission on Health Promoters and Human Rights (CAPSDH), Andhra Pradesh Vyavasaya Mruthidarula Union, Asabe Shehu Yar'Adua Foundation, Association des femmes pour la migration et le développement, Association for Community Development, Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP), Asylum Access America Latina, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio & Communication (BNNRC), Baptist Seminary of México, BASUG - Diaspora and Development, Benelux Afro Center, BRAC, CAFSO-WRAG for Development, Cal-Nev Philippine Solidarity Task Force of the United Methodist Church, Caritas Athens Refugee Programme, Caritas Hellas, Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center, Caritas of Russia, Caritas Sénégal /MADE AFRICA, Caritas Spain, Caritas Sweden, Caritas International Belgium, CAWUN (Construction and Allied Workers Union of Nepal), CCME - Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, Centre Amadou Hampâté BA, Centre Guide pour la Migration (CGTM), CIBAI Migrações, CODENAF (Cooperación y Desarrollo con el Norte de África), Collectif Sénégalais des Africaines pour la Promotion de l'Education Relative à l'Environnement – COSAPERE, Congregation of the Mission, Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias-CLAI, Cork Migrant Centre, Corporación Anne Frank Colombia, Council of Churches - The Netherlands, Croix-Rouge de Belgique, DMA Foundation, Dominican Leadership Conference, Ecumenical Ministry for Filipinos Abroad (EMFA), Embun Pelangi Foundation, Enda Perspectives Dialogues Politiques (Enda Diapol), Estancia Del Migrante Gonzalez y Martinez A.C., Federación Zacatecana A.C., Fédération Euro-Africaine de Solidarité, Federation International de la Diaspora Afar, Federation of Environmental and Ecological Diversity for Agricultural Revampment and Human Rights (FEEDAR & HR), Filipino Women's Council, Finnish Refugee Council, Forum Syd, Flyktinggruppernas Riksråd - FARR (Swedish Network of Refugee Support Groups), Global Child Care Tanzania, Groupe de Recherche-Action pour le Développement Intégral, Habeshia Agency Cooperation for Development, Human Rights Development Information Center (HRDIC), Human Rights Monitor of the Liberia United Methodist Church, Humanistisch Verbond-Dutch Humanist Association, Immigration Outreach Service Center, Iniciativa Ciudadana para la Promoción de la Cultura del Diálogo A.C., Insan Association, International Association for Community Development, International Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers, International Network of Migrant Women and Diaspora, International Presentation Association, International School of Advanced Studies (ISAS), International Youth Association TIP, İZMİR BALKAN GÖÇMENLERİ KÜLTÜR VE DAYANIŞMA DERNEĞİ, Kapo Seba Sangha KSS, Kenya Government Workers Union, Kerk in Actie, Loretto Community, Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Migrant Support Qatar, Migrante International, Migrante Sectoral Party for Overseas Filipinos & Their Families, Migrant-Rights.org, Migrants Matter, Myanmar Catholic Migration and Anti-Human Trafficking Network (MC MAHT), Myanmar Maritime Workers' Federation (MMWF), NGO Committee on Migration (New York), ONG Mouvement d'Action pour le Renouveau Social (MARS), Pakistan Rural Workers Social Welfare Organization, Pax Christi International, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Réseau des ONGs de Développement et Associations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme et de la Démocratie (RODADDHD), SHINE, Scalabrini International Migration Network – SIMN, SMR Scalabrinianas: Misión para Migrantes y Refugiados, Solidarity Center, Solidarity Now, Somali National Association in Sweden, Sudanese Partnership for Knowledge Transfer Through Expatriate Nationals (SPAKTEN), Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment (SWAGEN), Tomorrow's Women Development Organization, World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations, Unia Switzerland, Vivat International, VIVERE, World Council of Churches, Zimbabwe United Nations Association.