

First International Day of Solidarity with Migrant Workers

18 December 1997, NEDA sa Makati Bldg.

RICHARD SZAL

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

The Challenge of Migration

The issue of migration is of immense importance to all countries of the world. The International Labour Office (ILO) in Geneva has estimated that there are 40 million people who are economically active in countries of which they are not citizens. These migrant workers are accompanied by 50 million spouses and children. The ILO has also calculated that some 90 million people work and live outside their country of nationality-115 million if one adds refugees.

There are costs and benefits to labor migration, both to the sending and the receiving countries. Migrant workers send back large portions of their earnings, helping their families to improve their homes and to educate their children. It is also generally recognized that remittances help the migrants' countries of origin.

The Philippines is a case in point where the remittances of OFWs generate foreign exchange earnings, ease the country's unemployment problem and are partly instrumental in the growth of the country's Gross National Product (GNP). According to the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), P79.4 billion OFWs' remittances came in last year. There have undoubtedly pump-primed the Philippine economy. Moreover, the GNP of the Philippines grew by 6 percent during the first three quarters of 1997 due to P100.4 billion remittances from OFWs.

Host countries enormously benefit from migrants. In a way, these countries have the best of two worlds - namely their own skilled workers and the skilled workers from poor countries. The Philippines, for instance, has been deploying some of its most able and educated people. Most of these workers had jobs before they left and many were highly trained. In addition, migrant workers readily take on the least attractive jobs - the three Ds (dirty, dangerous and difficult) - in the host countries.

Nonetheless, migrant workers often pay a high costs for working abroad. Migrant workers sometimes fall victim to unscrupulous recruiters or traffickers who promise them non-existent lucrative jobs or who take large sums of money from them.

Workers face even more problems in the foreign environment of their workplace. Among the most common are harsh working conditions, physical abuse, sexual harassment, home-sickness, loneliness, boredom, discrimination, contract violation/substitution, differences in languages and culture, and inability to avail of social services and benefits such as social security and health care. The entry of women in international labor migration has opened up new problems involving their vulnerabilities.

In various instances, migrants are also seen as the cause of problems in the receiving countries. Migrants are made as convenient scapegoats for social problems, welfare dependency, unemployment, AIDS, crimes, among others.

The UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families was adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 1990. As part of an international campaign for the ratification of the Convention, the Asian Partnership on International Migration (APIM) launched 18 December as International Day of Solidarity with Migrant Workers. The launching was held in Manila in cooperation with international organizations. This dossier puts together statements of concern and recommendations made on that occasion.

Upon their return to their countries of origin, migrant workers suffer from more problems. The physical separation of family members due to overseas work may create problems such as infidelity and dissolution of marriage, and it may have deleterious consequences on the socialization of children. Migrant workers also find it difficult to reintegrate themselves into the economy.

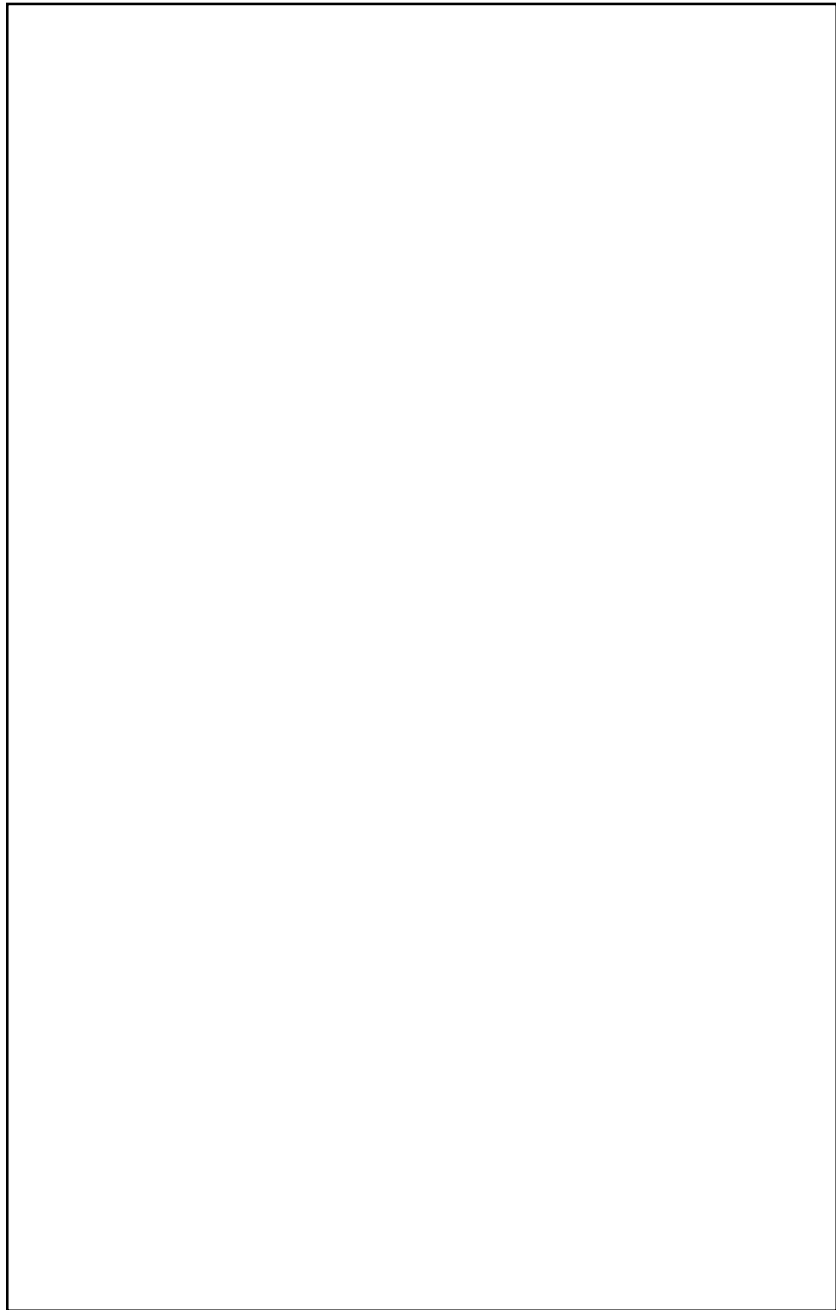
UN's Response

Recognizing the important contribution to society as well as the enormous problems of our "internationally shared human resources," the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) join in the call for the launching 18 December as the "International Day of Solidarity with Migrants." Today's affair is significant as it was seven years ago when the UN General Assembly adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. However, only nine countries have thus far ratified the Convention. These are Egypt, Morocco, Uganda, Colombia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Seychelles, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Cape Verde.

It is thus timely to renew our call for both sending and receiving countries to ratify the UN Convention as well as adopt various International Labour Standards for the protection of migrant workers.

Migration has through the years figured well in international relations. Traditionally handled autonomously by individual countries, migration has become a global phenomenon and a global issue which should be dealt with in a concerted effort. Failure to do so may prove costly for both sending and receiving countries. If it is problematic for migrants to enter host countries, it is equally problematic for host countries to send away migrants.

The management of migration flow sans problems and human rights violations has to be guaranteed. This business of protecting migrants persists as a formidable challenge the world community faces in its efforts to address the problems and concerns raised by international labor migration. The UN can only do so much. Ensuring protective mechanisms for the migrants should also be high in the agenda of both the sending and the receiving countries.



Let me say that the United Nations is always ready to extend assistance to migrant workers, as it has always done, in its quest for much better protective measures for this sector of the population.

Indeed, much remains to be done to help improve the plight of the migrant workers. We are confident that this activity will be a productive endeavor. We look forward to work closely with you in promoting the interests, rights and welfare of our migrant workers. (AM)

Project-tied workers are a category of migrant workers covered by the UN Convention.

LEONIDES T. CADAY
Department of Foreign Affairs

It is indeed a great honor for me to speak before you this morning, as a representative of the Philippine Government in this program, to launch December 18th as International Day of Solidarity with Migrants. In behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs, may I congratulate and commend the ILO and UNDP as well as their NGO partners namely, the Asian Partnership on International Migration (APIM) and the Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW), for this most laudable initiative.

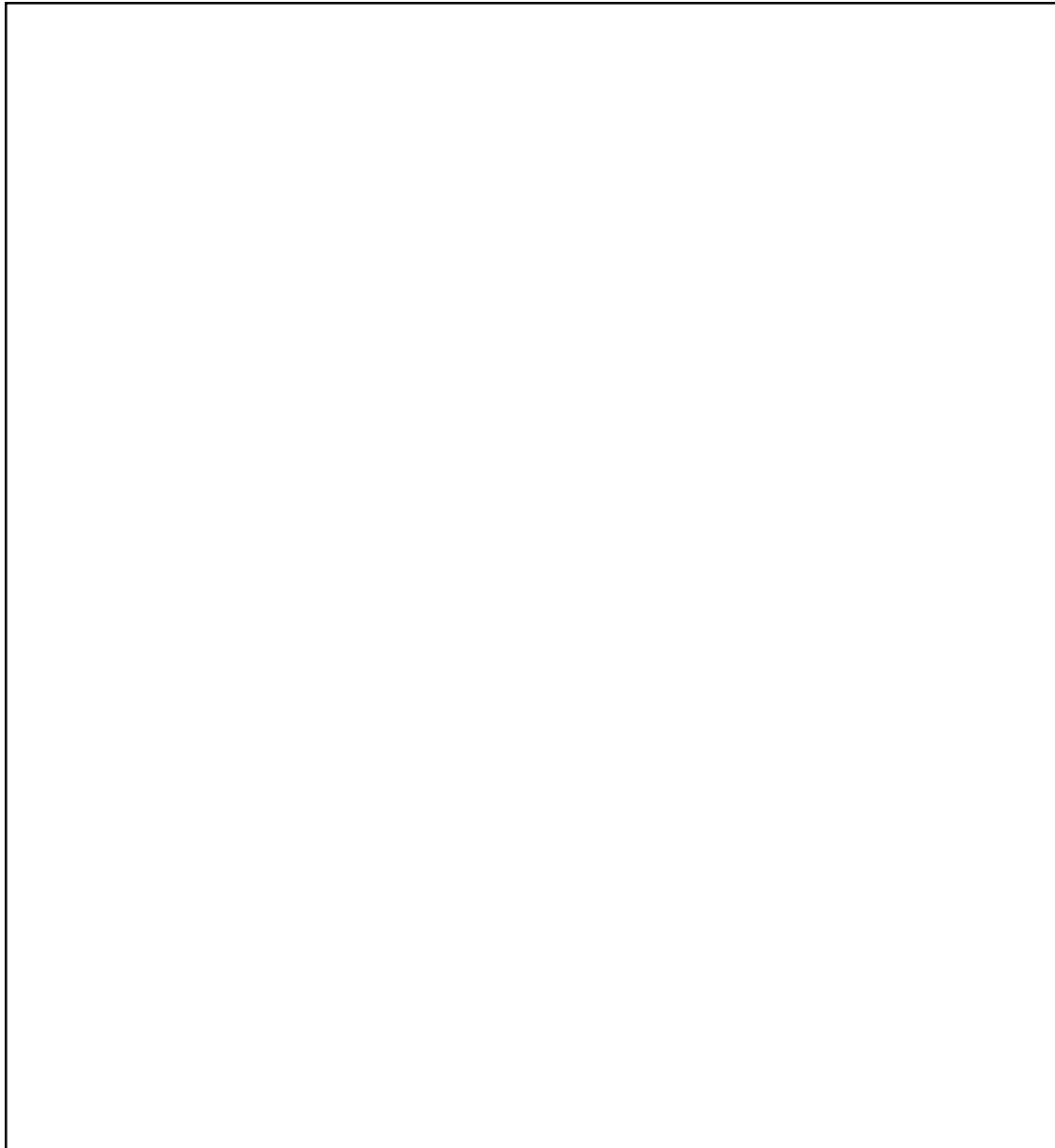
As you well know, issues that relate to the promotion and protection of the rights of migrants, have always been high in the agenda of the Philippine Government. Our efforts at home and abroad, both at the bilateral and multilateral fronts, are centered on the advancement of the rights and welfare of our disadvantaged and vulnerable sectors in society, which include migrant workers, women, children and the youth. The Philippines is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and their Families which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1990. However, to date, only nine out of 20 countries needed to put the Convention into effect, have ratified the Convention. The Philippines continues to urge UN member states to ratify the Convention. In

The continuing outflow of migrant workers calls for multisectoral collaboration and international cooperation.

addition, parallel initiatives are spearheaded by the Philippines such as sponsoring the adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolutions on 1) Violence Against Women Migrant Workers and 2) Traffic in Women and Girls. Both resolutions have consistently gained the support of UN Member States for the past five years.

In the domestic arena, the steady outflow of migrant workers compel us to focus government attention and resources to meet the challenges of the phenomenon of labor migration. Such needs have also become more complex through the years. Latest reports indicate that the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) have, in fact, grown from 4.2 million last year to approximately 6 million this year. Hence, remittances from OFWs also grew by 17.88 percent for the period of January to June of this year, totalling \$2.6 billion dollars compared to \$2.2 billion last year. Given such figures, the Philippines is committed to seek international cooperation in finding durable mechanisms that will promote the rights of Filipino migrant workers wherever they may be. In particular, the Philippines will continue to vigorously push for measures that will help protect women and children from sexual abuse and illegal trafficking.

A recent development in addressing irregular migration and migrant trafficking is the process of informal intergovernmental consultations among countries in East and Southeast Asia which was initiated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Philippine Government in Manila in 1996. A few weeks ago, the second round of dialogue was again hosted by the Philippines and IOM with the view to developing workable cooperation mechanisms to combat migrant trafficking and effectively address irregular migration in the region. This process of informal consultations will, hopefully, develop and mature to yield enduring results in the next years to come. The Philippines has also participated in a similar line of informal consultations, sponsored by the UNHCR, focusing on the plight of refugees and



The Convention provides that all migrant workers are entitled to equal rights and equal protection of their human rights regardless of their sex, race, religion among others.

forcibly displaced persons. We had participants in an experts' meeting in Bangkok on this issue last July.

The Philippine Government is committed to seek international cooperation with other governments, whether on a multilateral, regional or bilateral basis, and with NGOs or private organizations. Seeing many of our NGO partners around, may I express our appreciation for your support and hard work in highlighting the problems faced by migrant workers and in championing their just cause. We in the Philippine Government value the energy and wisdom of the non-government organizations

and people's organizations and share with them the same cause and the same mission.

At the national level, we have committed ourselves to multi-sectoral collaboration which involves all public and private sectors of Philippine society and which permeates all levels, from the national to the local government units.

May the launching of this International Day of Solidarity with Migrants foster greater awareness and more effective actions to address the needs and circumstances of migrants so that they may fully enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms even as they pursue their dreams and aspirations. (AM)

Migrant Workers' Issues

Migrants are — not necessarily but potentially — victims of exploitation, notably in undemocratic States. Exploitation is a serious, recurrent and deliberate disregard of key principles of national or international law.

Why can migrants be exploited easily? They can be exploited easily because the State, which is sovereign in international law, can draw a line between nationals and foreigners. The State can treat migrants worse than nationals.

Migrants can be exploited easily by employers because employers can count on foreign workers being ignorant, albeit only for lack of knowledge of the language. Employers can also count on migrants being defenseless because migrants find it difficult to organize themselves or bargain collectively.

What are the issues if States are sovereign and employers engage in profit-maximizing behavior?

The first issue is States' rights vs. human rights. Somewhere the arbitrariness of the State has to stop!

The second issue is discrimination among workers on grounds unrelated to the work they perform.

It has taken nations and the international community many years to strike a balance between States' rights and human rights, permissible grounds of discrimination and impermissible ones.

In international law, elements of that balance were initially incorporated in the ILO's Migration for Employment Convention of 1949 and the supplementary ILO Convention on Migrant Workers of 1975. The balance between States' rights and human rights, permissible and impermissible discrimination was most recently embodied in the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

It is very much to the honor of the Philippines that this country, among too few, has ratified the 1990 Convention. Thereby the Philippines signaled its acceptance of the balance I have spoken of, and distinguished itself as a modern democratic State.

It is regrettable that the older democratic States of western Europe, northern America and Oceania have not yet taken the step to ratify the 1990 Convention. By not doing that they are calling in question the very balance that they took the lead to elaborate.

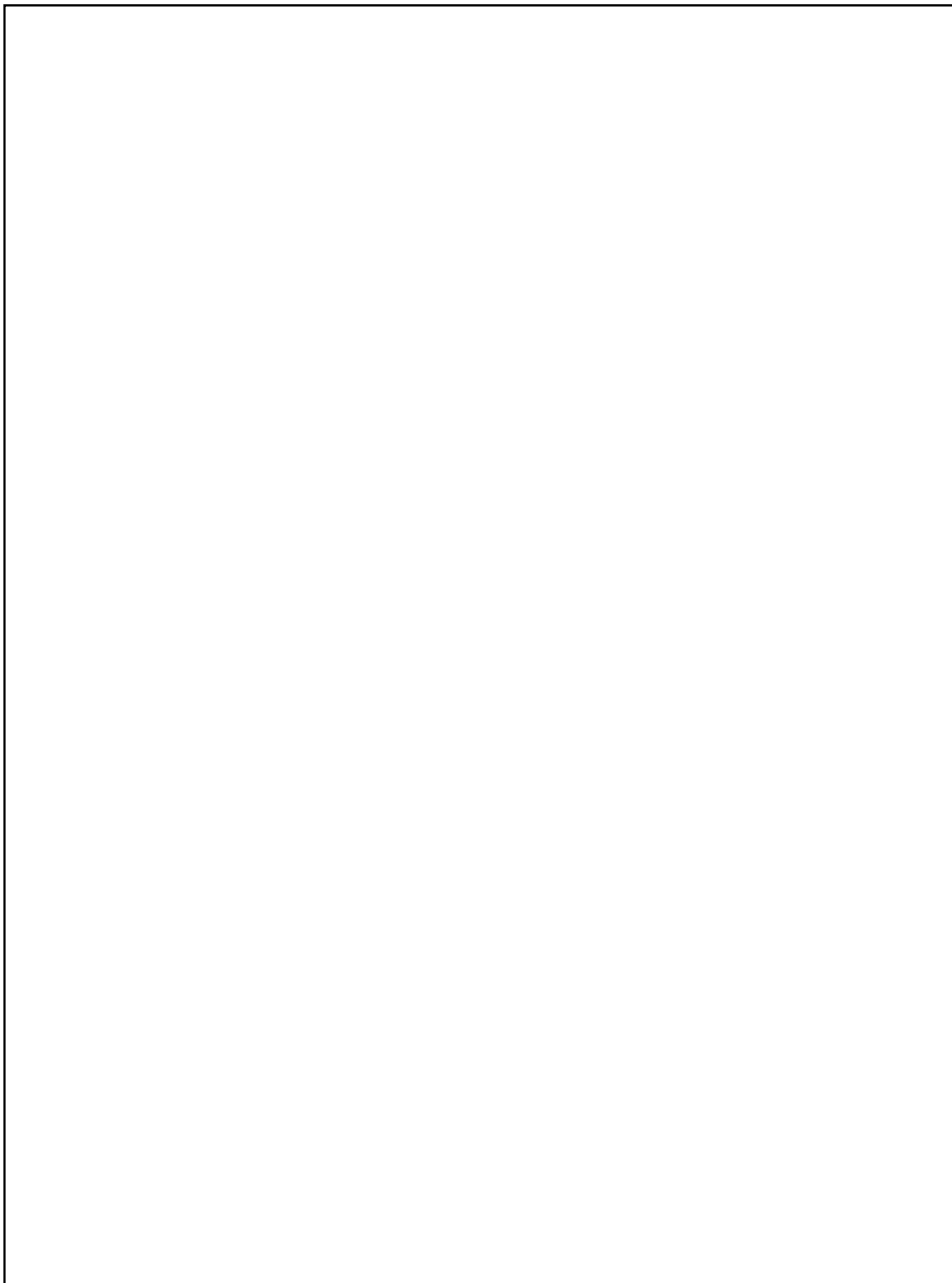
One must continue to push for the ratification of the 1990 Convention. There is no better Convention, and there is no alternative. The only alternative I can perceive is more State arbitrariness and more discrimination by employers. That is not the way ahead.

Current Concerns

I am certain that migrants will suffer from today's currency-cum-stock market crisis. Asian migrants will also suffer from the "nationalization" of the labor force that is the proclaimed aim of several Middle Eastern countries, notably Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. On top of that comes Hong Kong's uncertain evolution.

The crisis, like the efforts at "nationalization," will have a different impact on directly productive activities and on domestic workers. Directly productive activities such as construction, maintenance of public utilities, small-scale manufacturing, *etc.*, will be affected by redundancies. In countries not respecting the balance between States' rights and human rights, permissible and impermissible grounds of discrimination, migrant workers will be asked - or forced administratively - to leave in droves. Their poor home countries will be saddled with mouths to feed and bodies to clothe, to house and to provide employment for in even greater numbers than before.

Indirectly productive activities such as those of domestic workers, will be less affected by the current crisis; but they will not be totally immune from it because they are simultaneously indispensable and a status symbol. (AM)



The current crisis may have different impacts for migrant men and women.

But whatever the exact numbers or proportions may be, it is clear that return movements of migrants will grow.

Their home countries, therefore, would do well to dust off some ideas that have been

around for years and to do something serious and sustained about the reintegration and re-employment of their citizens who flock back from abroad. (AM)

MARK E. GETCHELL
International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Irregular migration, including human trafficking, has emerged in recent years as a major international challenge. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is increasingly convinced that irregular migration is becoming perhaps the single greatest threat to the kind of orderly, productive migration which IOM is pledged to advance. Both sending and receiving countries are affected by this alarming phenomenon. Worse still, the situation from all indications seems to be deteriorating as, unfortunately, there appears to be no decrease in the ingredients that, taken together, complete the recipe for the continued existence of irregular migration and human trafficking. The demand for labor in receiving countries has not greatly decreased and the supply of laborers in sending countries has likewise not diminished. The difference in living standards from one country to the next have become no less obvious. The desire of workers to pursue a path towards a better life for themselves and their families have become no less intense. All of these natural forces, the traditional push-pull factors, when taken together with States' sovereign rights to impose border controls and strict entry requirements, particularly in light of recent economic downturns in the region, create the perceived need on the part of potential migrants to circumvent these controls — the perfect setting which continues to be exploited by migrant traffickers who have turned this illicit activity into a multi-billion dollar industry.

To cite just a few examples in the region, it is estimated that the resident populations of foreign laborers number 700,000 to one million in Thailand, some 1.7 million in Malaysia and upwards of 240,000 in South Korea. It is also estimated, however, that about one half of these resident labor populations are not regularized and thus live and work outside any legal framework of their respective host countries. Along the same lines, of the some 4.2 million overseas workers from the Philippines, 1.8 million are estimated to be undocumented. Whereas legal

migrant workers by virtue of their being essentially temporary visitors to foreign host countries, are already often at the mercy of a different and less protective set of rules than host national workers, the illegal migrant workers are all that much worse off as they are considered lawbreakers, often work in underground situations far from the protection of any labor laws and are thus particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses.

On this day in 1990 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the "International Convention on the Protection of All Migrants Workers and their Families." Today, seven years later, only nine countries have ratified this convention and we must ask ourselves WHY. We cannot ignore the growing negative perception of migration which has emerged precisely because inhumane and disorderly migration has become increasingly visible. As more countries are affected by increasingly complex migration streams, the notion of migration and attitudes toward it have become more ambiguous.

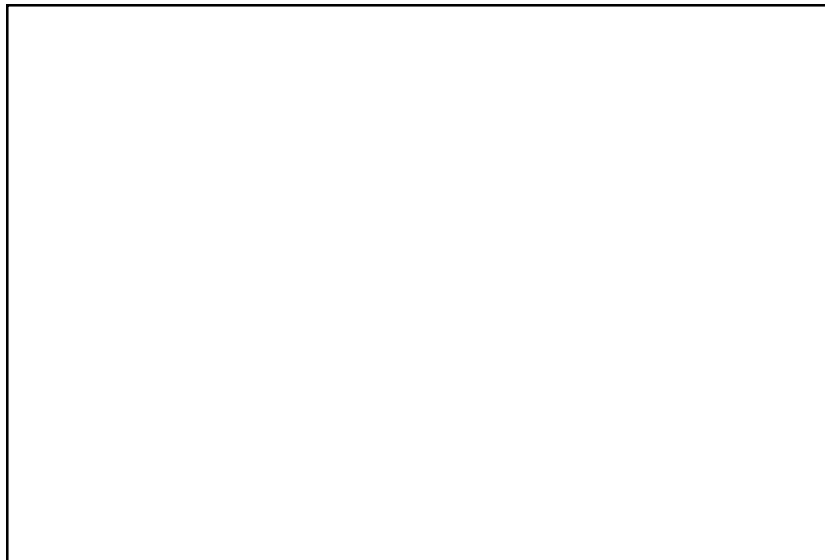
IOM's Mission Statement advises that "IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society." Yet the consequences of illegal migration and migrant trafficking directly impinge on this principle, in effect often giving migration, including labor migration, a bad name which is all too easily manipulated in the wider political arena to breed instability and xenophobia. It has become so easy for individuals, indeed populations and governments, to lose sight of the past, present and future benefits of orderly and managed migration when the negative and often highly publicized aspects of illegal, disorderly or uncontrolled migration are associated with labor migrants or migration in general. Today, the threat of disorderly migration is masking the potential benefits to all concerned of legal and orderly movements of people. Indeed the opportunities for legal migration are often reduced as policies which are reactive to illegal migration also negatively affect those seeking

migration which legally. Ironically, in many instances, those reactive and more restrictive policies on migration simply reduce the options of those who would otherwise have sought legal means and induced them to test the uncharted waters of illegal migration.

Of equal concern is the current and widely held belief that trafficked humans are criminals rather than victims. There is an urgent, compelling need to protect irregular migrants from exploitation, especially women and children.

The negative consequences of illegal migration are not limited to the migrants or victims themselves. Trafficking also has important consequences for the countries involved. As trafficking routes diversify across the globe, and journeys become increasingly complex, involving a variety of countries and continents, nearly all nations in the world are affected in some manner by migrant trafficking. Countries of destination confront the real and perceived political, economic and social effects of a growing clandestine migrant community, including popular fear of uncontrolled borders and xenophobic sentiment. In countries where migrant trafficking is dominated by international organized crime networks, the expanding presence and operation of such rings may pose a serious challenge to national security structures. So why is it that we the international community have been slow to realize the full dimensions of irregular migration, and slower still to take effective action to counter it and offer our nationals the protection which they deserve? First, when asylum seeker processes are involved, there is the concern that legitimate refugees may be denied an opportunity for asylum. Second, there is a disinclination to diminish the cash remittances of irregular migrants, which are often important to the economies of countries of origin. Third, the economies of receiving countries themselves often rely on irregular migrant workers. Fourth, the criminal organization on which much of irregular migration rests is difficult and dangerous to deal with. And fifth, opportunities for legal, orderly and mutually beneficial migration are often insufficient to meet the legitimate demand for migration in the modern world.

The International Conference on Population and Development or the Cairo Conference of 1994 outlined a comprehensive approach to combat irregular migration and trafficking. Some components of the ILO/UNHCR/IOM



Document will sound familiar:

1. Address root causes with development programs in source countries.
2. Strengthen government migration structures.
3. Create transparent and coordinated migration regimes.
4. Disseminate accurate migration information.
5. Assist victims with return and reintegration programs.

The Cairo Conference urges us to examine the root causes of migration.

For its part, IOM has outlined its own action-oriented package of activities at the 4th U.N. Conference on Women in Beijing to address the issue of trafficking of women and children migrants. The elements of this package— research; information campaigns; technical cooperation; and return/reintegration assistance — are priority activities within IOM and aim at protection through both prevention as well as assistance to victims.

Regarding research activities in this region, IOM has this year conducted a study on 100 Filipino women trafficked to Japan for sexual exploitation as well as another focusing on irregular movements between the Philippines and Malaysia.

Regarding information dissemination activities, IOM has begun a nationwide weekly

Pre-departure information programs can raise awareness of the realities of migration.

radio program in the Philippines to raise the awareness of potential migrants on the realities of migration and the pitfalls of illegal migration and trafficking. IOM is preparing a TV information campaign in Thailand against irregular migration and trafficking. As a follow-up to national seminars organized by IOM in Vietnam on the prevention of trafficking in women and children, IOM has developed similar information programs in Long San. The possibility and enhanced effectiveness of carrying out a high impact information campaign region-wide, in both sending and receiving countries, is under consideration.

Regarding technical cooperation, both Thailand and the Philippines have received this assistance in the form of capacity building through trainers' trainings. Fulfilling certain equipment needs assistance to the Thai government resulted in establishing a working group on trafficking under the Office of the National Commission on Women's Affairs (ONCWA).

With regard to return and reintegration assistance, IOM has begun two pilot programs to return trafficked Chinese, Cambodian and Vietnamese women and children from Thailand to their homes with suitable reintegration assistance given by partner agencies upon reception.

These activities, although useful and effective and well appreciated by all stakeholders, only begin to address the issue of migrant trafficking and illegal migration, and appear at times to only scratch the surface of the problem. The picture painted is grim, not only for the migrant men, women and children who find themselves in ever increasing vulnerable living conditions, but also for the countries involved, their governments and populations. The time has long arrived to find further common instruments to combat this phenomenon and protect our migrant workers abroad. IOM remains committed to its principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society and stands ready to work together with the UN, other international organizations, NGOs and governments themselves towards better managed migration which offers full legal protection to and support workers abroad.

I close with the observation made by a migrant labor receiving country whose official remarked "we invited foreign migrant workers to help our country's development - but HUMAN BEINGS arrived."

It is with great pleasure that I join with you all today in recognition of their humanness and vulnerabilities to celebrate this "International Day of Solidarity with Migrants." (AM)

ANWAR FAZAL

Asian Partnership on International Migration (APIM)

I have some very rapid appraisal ideas about civilized societies and one of the indicators I use is how societies treat visitors and foreigners generally and especially those who take up economic activities. We test their local host's pride, generosity and their humanity.

Today, if we look at how migrant workers and their families are treated, we often see the real and worst sides of people and institutions.

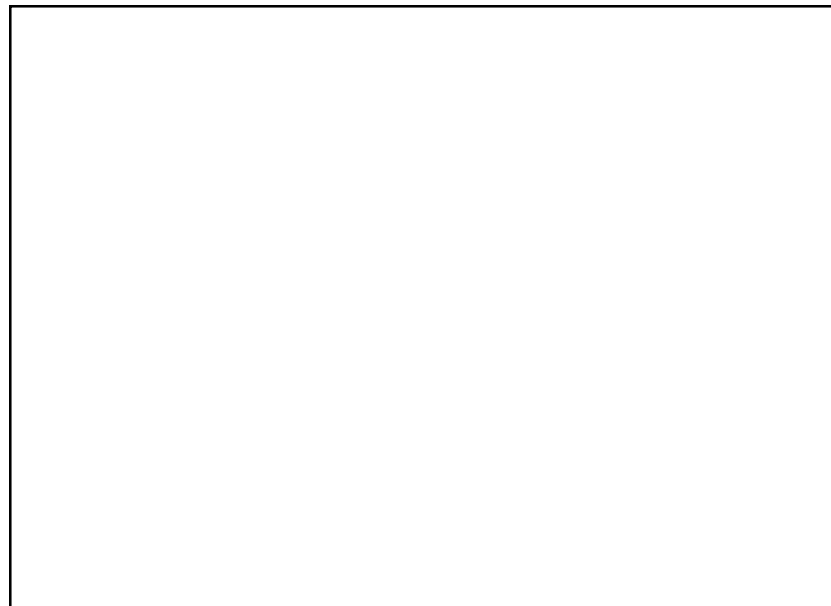
It took 11 years and 1 day from the time the General Assembly adopted a resolutions entitled "Measures to Improve the Situation and Ensure the Human Rights and Dignity of Migrant Workers" on December 1979 to the time in December 18, 1990 when it adopted the "International Convention on the Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families."

It was an ingenious convention reaffirming and packaging existing standards of human rights in other international instruments while incorporating ideas unique to the context of migrant workers. Perhaps because it was so thorough and bold that so few countries have ratified it and there seems little enthusiasm globally.

A group of us have decided to change that or at least to try to. Margaret Mead, the great social anthropologist, once said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

A new network has been formed. It is called the Asian Partnership in International Migration (APIM). A core activity was decided that we get the world to pay attention to the issues of migrant workers. We agreed that December 18 be celebrated world wide as the International Day of Solidarity with Migrant Workers and their Families.

Today is the inaugural launch of that day. Today marks a historical landmark for a popular campaign for global solidarity with migrant workers and to get the Convention in place firmly all over the world.



In doing so, we address five particular challenges:

First, we are addressing a cluster of human rights issues. No human being should be treated the way many migrants are. A regime of criminality is emerging and taking root. We need to ask more loudly "what are rights and what are wrongs?"

Secondly, we are addressing the reality of a cluster of issues of values, family and other community relationship, sadly, much disintegration and many collapses. We need to ask "what lives, what dies?"

Thirdly, we have a range of economic issues. Billions of dollars are being remitted monthly. Local economies are transformed, even distorted. We need to ask "what kind of economies" is breeding and feeding on this issue. We need to ask "who gets rich, who gets poorer?"

Fourthly, we have the challenge of environmental and health issues, of the transmission of old diseases and new ones (*e.g.*, sudden death syndrome). We need to ask "who lives, who dies?" (AM)

No human being should be treated the way many migrants are.

*Solidarity with migrants
compels us to ask what can we
do?*

Fifthly, we have the challenge of partnership - this issue needs the combined humanity and concerted action of a whole range of stakeholders including governments, researchers, civil society, UN agencies and employers. We need to ask "who is responsible, who is irresponsible?"

What can we do?

We must use all the power of popular mobilization, bringing together diverse interests and energies. We must be prepared to be in for the long haul.

The Day provides with it a unifying and creative opportunity to share and build on the stated commitment of global institutions and to share the competence of many actors in government, business and civil society.

The Day provides for us a platform for specific "do-able" actions. The Day reminds us

of the core universal values about dignity, human rights, fairness and justice.

In a world dominated by greed and criminality, a world that seems to thrive on disorder and dislocation, a world that breeds violence and racism, developing universal standards of humanity and justice and meeting human needs are ever more essential.

In the language of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), we call this kind of new world order, "Sustainable Human Development." Through this day of Solidarity and by being fair to workers and families everywhere, we hope to further our agenda of hope and action.

UNDP through its initiative, Asia Pacific 2000, is committed to help all those who want to take up the issues of migrant workers. (AM)

GRAZIANO BATTISTELLA
Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC)

The current financial crisis that is crippling Asian economies has also evidenced the profound changes brought about by globalization. Among these changes, analysts have indicated “the partial denationalization of national territory and a partial shift of some components of state sovereignty to other institutions” (Sassen, 1997).

Amidst these changes, the international circulation of labor has remained very much in the domain of the nation state, a moment of re-nationalization for the state. The control of the borders in regard to people to be admitted to the national territory is considered the prerogative of the state, which reacts when such control is threatened. The widespread circulation of undocumented migrants in Asia is one such threat. Several policy measures adopted in 1997 in Asia (for instance, the amendments to the immigration act in Malaysia, Japan and Taiwan) all responded to the need to take greater control of the borders.

The management of migration has become more difficult in all countries in recent years and it highlights the inadequacy of the state to manage migration in this age of globalization. International migration reveals that there exist “two different regimes for the circulation of capital and the circulation of immigrants” (Sassen, 1997), a reality that is problematic. Migration questions the traditional understanding of concepts such as sovereignty. It also questions the approach to migration by individual countries.

An international migration regime has been advocated a long time ago, but it is not yet in place. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families contains the elements for a common approach to migration. Unfortunately, the Convention is far from being effective because only nine countries have ratified it. Eleven more signatories are needed. If trends proceed at the present level, it will take perhaps seven more years before the Convention enters into force. And when it will enter

into force, it might not concern major receiving countries, which are unlikely to become party to it.

It is the opinion of the NGO community that increasing efforts are required to press governments towards ratifying the Convention. It is also the opinion of the NGOs that the Convention can serve as an educational instrument, and the empowerment of migrants. These concerns inspired the Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW) to produce the pamphlet, *Rights of Migrants: A Primer on the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families*. A better awareness of migrants’ rights will not only help in their protection but also contribute to a society with more human dignity. (AM)

CECILLE MOTUS
Philippine Migrant Rights Watch (PMRW)

We have been reminded this morning that the “International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families” is seven years old today. And yet, after seven years, the Convention regrettably remains unenforceable because countries which have ratified it fall dismally short of the required twenty.

We have heard from previous speakers the overwhelming statistics on labor migration, the challenge globalization presents to overseas labor employment, and the alarming rise in abuse and exploitation of migrant workers (especially women). It behooves us - governments, international agencies, NGOs and concerned advocates of migrant workers - to continue the vigorous massive information and advocacy cam-

The temporary nature of migration in Asia does not allow for family reunification.

paign so that migrants all over the world will enjoy the protection and benefits of the legal instrument which is the “International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.”

The Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW), in partnership with the Scalabrini Migration Center and the Asia Partnership on International Migration developed the “Rights of Migrants: A Primer on the UN Convention on the Protections of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families.” To supplement the primer is this poster, *Protection of Migrants - An Urgent Concern in Asia* to visually drive home the point that the International Convention remains today a mere piece of paper unable to protect the rights of migrants. It features a table which shows the status of ratification of different UN conventions by Asian countries; and a map of Asia depicting the number of conventions ratified.

As suggested by the poster, many countries laudably prioritized their concerns or issues faced by children, women and ethnic or religious minority groups. In contrast, the plight of refugees and migrants has been met with lukewarm or less enthusiastic responses.

On this celebration of the First International Day of Solidarity with Migrants, PMRW enjoins all of you and your partners to use this poster to campaign vigorously so that by this time next year, on December 18, 1998, when we meet again for the Second International Day of Solidarity with Migrants, what is United Nations Resolution #45/158, otherwise known as the International Convention for The Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families - will have been enforced because twenty UN member countries have ratified it.

May 1998 will bring to reality our dream that the human and worker rights of more than 70 million migrant workers all over the world (including the more than 4 million Filipinos in various countries) will be guaranteed under international legal protection. (AM)

Solidarity with the Stranger

The Pope's Message for World Migration Day

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. The Church looks with deep concern at the increased flow of migrants and refugees, and questions herself about the causes of this phenomenon and the particular conditions of those who are forced for various reasons to leave their homeland. In fact, the situation of the world's migrants and refugees seems ever more precarious. Violence sometimes obliges entire populations to leave their homeland to escape repeated atrocities; more frequently, it is poverty and the lack of prospects for development which spur individuals and families to go into exile, to seek ways to survive in distant lands, where it is not easy to find a suitable welcome.

Many initiatives aim at alleviating the hardships and sufferings of migrants and refugees. I express my deep appreciation of those who are dedicated to them, together with a cordial encouragement to continue generously supporting them, overcoming the many difficulties they meet on the way. In addition to the problems connected with cultural, social and sometimes even religious barriers, there are those associated with other phenomena such as the unemployment that afflicts even countries which have been the traditional destination of immigrants, the break-up of families, the lack of services and the precarious situation of so many aspects of daily life. Moreover, the host community fears the loss of its own identity because of the rapid increase of these "stranger" through their demographic growth, the legal mechanisms for reuniting families and clandestine enlistment in the so-called underground economy. When there is no prospect of harmonious and peaceful integration, withdrawal into self, tension with one's surroundings, dispersal and the waste of energies become real risks, with negative and sometimes tragic results. People find themselves "more scattered than before, divided in speech, divided among themselves, incapable of con-

sensus and agreement" (*Apostolic Exhortation Reconsiliatio et Paenitentia*, n.13).

The mass media can play an important role, both positive and negative. Their activity can foster a proper evaluation and better understanding of the problems of the "new arrivals," dispelling prejudices and emotional reactions, or instead, it can breed rejection and hostility, impeding and jeopardizing proper integration.

2. All this raises urgent challenges to the Christian community, which makes attention to migrants and refugees one of its pastoral priorities. From this standpoint World Migration Day is an appropriate occasion for reflecting on how to intervene ever more effectively in this sensitive apostolate.

For the Christian, acceptance of and solidarity with the stranger are not only a human duty of hospitality, but a precise demand of fidelity itself to Christ's teaching. For the believer, caring for migrants means striving to guarantee a place within the individual Christian community for his brothers and sisters coming from afar, and working so that every human being's personal rights are recognized. The Church invites all people of goodwill to make their own contribution so that every person is respected and discriminations that debase human dignity are banned. Her action, sustained by prayer, is inspired by the Gospel and guided by her age-old experience.

The Ecclesial Community's activity is also an incentive to the leaders of peoples and international communities, institutions and organizations of various kinds involved in the phenomenon of migration. An expert in humanity, the Church fulfills her task by enlightening consciences with her teaching and witness, and by encouraging appropriate initiatives to ensure that immigrants find the right place within individual societies.

3. In particular, she concretely urges Christian migrants and refugees not to turn in on

same way that Christ by his Incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the people among whom he lived" (*Ad gentes*, n.10).

Moreover, the fact that apostolic action for migrants is sometimes carried out in the midst of suspicion and even hostility can never become a reason for abandoning the commitment to solidarity and human advancement. Jesus' demanding assertion: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35) retains its power in all circumstances and challenges the conscience of those who intend to follow in his footsteps. For the believer, accepting others is not only philanthropy or a natural concern for his fellow man. It is far more, because in every human being he knows he is meeting Christ, who expects to be loved and served in our brothers and sisters, especially in the poorest and neediest.

4. Jesus, the only-begotten Son made man, is the living icon of God's solidarity with men. "Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). Only a Christian community really attentive to others welcomes and carries on the legacy bequeathed by Jesus to the Apostles in the Upper Room on the eve of his death on the Cross: "Such as my love has been for you, so must your love for each other" (Jn 13:34). The Redeemer asks for a love that is self-giving, gratuitous and disinterested.

In this regard, the words of St. James, who wrote to the "twelve tribes of the diaspora," probably Christians of Jewish origin dispersed throughout the Graeco-Roman world, sound more prophetic than ever: "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (Jas 2:14-17).

5. I am pleased to call attention here to the shining example of an apostle who was able to witness in a living and prophetic way to Christ's love for migrants. I am speaking of Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini, whom I had the joy of beatifying today, 9 November.

He was deeply moved by the dramatic exodus of migrants who, in the final decades of the last century, left Europe in large numbers for the countries of the New World, and he clearly

The phenomenon of human mobility calls to mind the very image of the Church, a pilgrim people on earth.

themselves, isolating themselves from the pastoral life of the Diocese or parish that accepts them. At the same time, however, she puts clergy and faithful on guard against attempting merely to assimilate them, which destroys their particular characteristics. Rather she encourages the gradual integration of these brothers and sister, making the most of their diversity to build an authentic family of believers which is welcoming and supportive.

To this end it is good for the local community into which migrants and refugees are integrated to provide them with structures that help them actively assume their responsibilities. In this regard, the priest specifically assigned to the care of migrants is asked to be a bridge between different cultures and mentalities. This presupposes an awareness that he is fulfilling a truly missionary ministry "in the

saw the need to provide pastoral care for them through an appropriate network of social assistance. In this regard, he showed keen spiritual insight and sound practical sense in founding the Congregation of the Missionaries and Missionary Sisters of St. Charles. He also strongly supported the introduction of legislative and institutional measures for the human and legal protection of migrants against every form of exploitation.

Today in certainly different social situations, the spiritual sons and daughters of Bishop Scalabrini, who were later joined by the Lay Scalabrinian Missionaries, heirs to the same charism, continue to witness to Christ's universal message of salvation. May Bishop Scalabrini sustain by his example and intercession everyone throughout the world who works in the service of migrants and refugees.

6. To offer a solid Christian witness in this demanding and complex sector, it is important "to gain a renewed appreciation of the Spirit as the One who builds the kingdom of God within the course of history and prepares its full manifestation in Jesus Christ" (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, n.45).

How can we forget that 1998 is dedicated to the Holy Spirit, whose role was revealed in an extraordinarily effective way at Pentecost? I wrote in my *Message for the 16th World Day of Peace*: the descent of "the Holy Spirit caused the first disciples of the Lord to rediscover, beyond the diversity of languages, the royal road to peace in brotherhood" (n.12; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 27 December 1982, p.10).

In ancient Babel pride had shattered the unity of the human family. The Spirit of Pentecost came to heal this lost unity with his gifts, re-establishing it on the model of Trinitarian communion, in which the three distinct Persons subsist in the undivided unity of the divine nature. All those who listened to the Apostles on whom the Spirit descended were astonished to hear them speaking each in his own language (cf. Act 2:7-11). Unanimity in listening, then as today, does not jeopardize the diversity of cultures since "every culture is an effort to ponder the mystery of the world and in particular of the human person: it is a way of giving an expression to the transcendent dimension of human life." Over and above "all the differences which distinguish individuals and peoples, there is a *fundamental commonality*. For different cultures are but different ways of facing the question of

the meaning of personal existence" (*Address to the 50th General Assembly of the United Nations*, 5 October 1995, n.9; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 11 October 1995, p.9).

The year of the Holy Spirit therefore invites believers to live more deeply the theological virtue of hope, which offers them solid and profound reasons for their commitment to the new evangelization to their efforts for those who, coming from different countries and cultures, expect our help in fulfilling their human potential.

7. To evangelize is to give an account to all of the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pt 3:15). In this duty the first Christians, although a social minority, were boldly enterprising. Sustained by the *parresia* instilled in them by the Holy Spirit, they could give candid witness to their own faith.

Today too, "Christians are called to prepare for the Great Jubilee of the beginning of the third millennium by *renewing their hope in the definitive coming of the kingdom of God*, preparing for it daily in their hearts, in the Christian community to which they belong, in their particular social context" (Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n.46).

The phenomenon of human mobility calls to mind the very image of the Church, a pilgrim people on earth, but constantly on her way to the heavenly homeland. Even in the innumerable hardships it involves, this path reminds us of the future world whose prospective image spurs us to transform the present, which must be freed from injustice and oppression in view of the encounter with God, the ultimate goal of all men.

I entrust the Christian community's apostolic commitment to migrants and refugees to "Mary, who conceived the Incarnate Word by the power of the Holy Spirit and then in the whole of her life allowed herself to be guided by his interior activity. . . . Mary gave full expression to the longing of the poor of Yahweh and is a radiant model for those who entrust themselves with all their hearts to the promises of God" (ibid., n.48). May she accompany with motherly concern all those who work for migrants and refugees; may she dry the tears and console all who have had to leave their own land and loved ones.

May everyone also be comforted by my Blessing.

From the Vatican, 9 November 1997, the twentieth year of the Pontificate. (AM)