



Declaration on the occasion of the 97th World Day of Migrants and Refugees - 16 JANUARY 2011

At its General Assembly in Nantes (France) in October 2009, the World Movement of Christian Workers, MMTC (1) adopted an action plan for the years 2009/2013 around the theme *“Migrant Workers and Globalisation”*. Starting from the reflections brought by its member movements from the four continents, it has associated itself completely with this world day of migrants and refugees.

The movement of migration has been constant throughout the history of humanity. It is difficult, even impossible to prevent the mobility of human beings. Throughout time, men and women have migrated for economic, political, social, cultural reasons.

Today, there are about 200 million international migrants in the world of more than 6 billion inhabitants, about 3% of the world's population. And it is often ignored in the countries of the north that 80% of migrants in the world come from countries of the south going to other countries of the south.

The free circulation of people is guaranteed by the “universal declaration of human rights” (articles 13 et 14). The reality is unfortunately very different. Thus for example, if European students are encouraged by scholarships to spend a year studying abroad to open their eyes and spirit to other realities, it is not the same for students from Africa or certain Asian countries.

They do not leave their countries their families or their culture without profound reasons. The global economic crisis has shown that a market economy “free” unregulated without limits cannot create a fairer or more just world. The workers have been the first

victims of this crisis, particularly in the south. The absence of democracy, corruption, the lack of future for young people, misery hunger, notably in rural areas, leads to an increase in internal migration (countryside to the towns) or external (to neighbouring countries or beyond). So, at peril of losing their lives, men and women and even children undertake long voyages hoping to find in another country a better future. Some perish at sea or in the desert, bandits will rob others. A certain number will be blocked at the borders where they will live in misery until the end. Those who succeed spend time in detention centres, deported or live clandestinely.

The globalised economy therefore requires a rethinking of the migration phenomenon. It is necessary to move away from seeing migration as a permanent danger, and to get out of the fear often aroused by certain politicians. The policies of security and repression put in place by northern countries show they are limited in the long term and are doomed to failure. It is also important to denounce the hypocrisy that consists of pursuing “clandestine workers” even though many of them have a regular job and actively participate in the local economy of the host country.

We cannot accept that the regulation of migratory movements takes place solely on the basis of the economic needs of Northern countries at the behest of the market against the unity of families. The only sustainable solution is by negotiated fair agreements between the countries of origin and the host countries that aim to achieve a mutual and interdependent development.



“One Human Family”

“All the peoples form together one single community” (Acts of the Apostles 17/26)

In the face of the situation of migrants today, we are all, men and women, called to a progressive conversion in bringing down cultural barriers, and stereotypes. Seeing in the stranger a brother or sister of humanity is an opportunity and not a threat for a better mutual development.

“Everyone,...migrant and the local population belong to a unique family.... And all have the same right to benefit from the wealth of the earth of which the destination is universal....” This message of Pope Benedict XVI for the 97th world day of migrants and refugees is echoed in the numerous actions carried out by member movements of the WMCW with migrants and their families: help to undocumented workers, struggle against racism, support to migrant workers who are exploited by creating trades unions and associations to defend their rights. Where arbitrary injustice reigns, members of the WMCW engage in a struggle with others for justice and for the recognition of the contribution and place of migrants within society.

It is not a question of denying the difficulties that are often born out of a meeting of different cultures, ways of living or of thinking differently. These misunderstandings give rise to conflict making some communities more

closed. The economic crisis, the rise in unemployment and poverty, and living conditions that are often degrading, reinforces this phenomenon. Living together is thus threatened and in Europe and elsewhere, we see a rise in extreme right wing ideologies, which accuse migrants of all, that is bad in society.

This situation is very dangerous. In a globalised society, the solution does not reside in countries closing in on themselves. On the contrary, cultures have to meet one another and to make common the best aspects in each, “To Give and To Receive-Reciprocate”.

It is this difficult task that members of the movements of the WMCW have been engaged for many years already, they are profoundly convinced that ***“there are no strangers in God’s house”***. By their actions, their determination, they plant the seeds of a future world, multiracial, multicultural, where *men will no longer prey on other men*.

This is why the WMCW endorses the prayer of Pope Benedict XVI so that ***“Men and women (are) capable of fraternal relations and (that) at the social political and institutional level...there will be an increased understanding and reciprocal respect between peoples and cultures”***.

The secretariat of the WMCW
15/12/2001

(1) The World Movement of Christian Workers is composed of fifty movements from Asia, Africa, America and Europe.

MMTC-WMCW-WBCA

124 Boulevard du Jubilé B-1080 Bruxelles (Belgium)
Betina BEATE (Secretaria General - General Secretary) eMail: betina.beate@mmtc-infor.com
Jean Michel LANOIZELEZ (Tesorier - Treasurer) eMail: jeanmichel.lanoizelez@mmtc-infor.com