

ANTIGUA DECLARATION
of the First International Forum on Migration and Peace

Antigua, Guatemala

January 29 and 30, 2009

CONVENED BY

the **Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN)**

a federation of over 170 non-governmental organizations committed to the protection of the human rights of people on the move, and to the promotion of a culture of peaceful coexistence between migrants and local communities while SIMN role is that of a mediator for the establishment of a more interconnected society as a result of its social and Christian commitment and its preferential option for the most vulnerable people within the phenomenon of human mobility;

WITH THE SUPPORT OF

the Episcopal Conference of Guatemala, and sponsorship, among others, of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Cassamarca Foundation, Trocaire, the Soros Foundation-Guatemala, CRS-Guatemala and more than 180 participants who attended the *First International Forum on Migration and Peace* representing :

**NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATES,
GOVERNMENTS,
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS,
SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS,
CHURCHES
ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS,
MEDIA,
MIGRANTS AND
MIGRANTS ORGANIZATIONS,**

CALLED TO A FORUM on “Borders: Walls or Bridges?”

AWARE OF:

- THE conflicts generated by the negative and misguided perception of migration as an element linked to security, the reason behind building new, physical and legal walls;
- THE opportunity created by the coexistence of migrants and local communities in the establishment of a society of cultural exchange and mutual enrichment;
- THE sustainable development, created by the migrants in the country of origin, of transit and of destination;
- THE need to recognize the rights of every human being and ensure their safety in their right of movement and in their right of not having to migrate;
- THE need to establish and nurture a culture of peace on the borders (geographical and human, political and cultural, individual and collective) to overcome division, racism, discrimination, conflict and poverty and to eliminate human trafficking and human rights violations, in particular violence and abuse of the most vulnerable;
- THE desire to develop the full potential of international migration in the construction of a peaceful society and in the conception of borders as bridges not as walls.

CONSIDERING:

- THAT migration is a phenomenon inherent in human nature that has always existed and can not be held back by restrictive policies or walls;
- THAT social instability, inequality, natural disasters, armed conflict, lack of a political culture of individual and collective responsibility in seeking the common good, and institutional weakness, are some of the main causes of migration, both internationally and in the Americas;
- THAT the current process of globalization, the deepening social inequalities and economic imbalances among countries, are factors in increased forced migration, the movement of men, women and children who, because of their extreme poverty and needs of livelihood, are forced to leave their homes and their places of origin;
- THAT migrants denounce such asymmetries and injustices and proclaim the need for structural change;
- THAT human mobility, traditionally perceived as a significant contribution to the economies and to the societies of sending and receiving countries, is currently perceived, by many countries of transit and destination, as a problem;
- THAT migrants are all too often viewed as a threat and are subjected to discrimination, rejection and harassment, stemming from xenophobic actions of some segments of society;
- THAT this negative perception is caused by the introduction of anti-immigration policies by governments of transit and destination countries, putting the migrants in situations of high vulnerability;
- THAT the principles of reciprocity in social exchange are ignored and that each country should apply internally all they require internationally from other countries;
- THAT the borders, "no-man's-land" of uprooted people, are the "best place" for dialogue and communication, and they contain in themselves the possibility of establishing a "new place" of mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence;

THAT migration policies in sending countries as well as in transit and destination countries are too often not conducive to the creation of peaceful bridges of coexistence;

THAT this lack of consistency requires a redefinition of immigration policies that place at their core the protection of the human rights of all people, particularly the most vulnerable, such as migrants (migrants understood as any person in mobility, be it within or outside their country of origin).

DECLARE:

THAT the building of walls is only the visible and symbolic act of many of current immigration policies, characterized by their restrictive principles, and whose real purpose is not to close the avenues of migration, but to create a climate of terror and persecution of undocumented migrants exposing them to extreme levels of vulnerability and exploitation, which foreshadow new forms of slavery;

THAT in this climate of suspicion not only are there violations of human, political, economic (including employment), social and cultural rights, but also the significant positive contribution that migrants make to the host economies and societies are hidden;

THAT the countries of origin have become exporters of human capital, thereby jeopardizing, in the long run, their own development, even though their emigration lift millions of families from poverty, thus enhancing opportunities for future generations and providing the possibility of improving their well-being;

THAT migrants are actively involved in generating the necessary conditions for sustainable development in their home countries through the sending of remittances, through the demographic changes that migration produces and by becoming bridges of communication and cultural exchange;

THAT the governments of the countries of origin cannot use migrants' remittances for exemption from their obligation to implement development policies that reduce the existing imbalances and prevailing social inequalities and guarantee their people the right not to migrate;

THAT international migration besides helping the development of the countries of origin, is an element of and contributes to all levels of development of the countries of transit and destination;

THAT it is necessary to work for the designation of the border as a new place of enrichment and sharing and to overcome the notion of multiculturalism with inter-culturalism based on those principles of reciprocity and solidarity that internal and international migrations call for;

THAT, the creation of bridges of dignity requires the establishment of tools that enable the development of personal and individual responsibility in the knowledge of their rights and duties, in the trust of the institutions of the sending, transit and receiving countries and the recognition of their rights;

THAT this must be accompanied by a renewed concept of citizenship and the building of a greater confidence in the institutional apparatus of sending, transit and receiving countries, strengthening their role as protectors of the rights of all, both local citizens and migrant citizens, announcing the need for change towards the utopia of a universal citizenship;

THAT it is not through walls and anti-immigration policies that we can move towards effective dynamisms for building true bridges between Migration and Peace and develop a peaceful and mutually rewarding existence, but through the establishment of means for the recognition and protection of the rights of every person, like the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members their Families passed in 1990 by the UN;

THAT although there has been significant progress at the policy level, relating to the protection and defense of migrant rights in the framework of regional and international bodies, the fact is that these conventions have not been ratified or applied by any of the major receiving countries.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES TO:

DIRECT our joint efforts to maximize the positive impact of international migration on development, both in the sending and receiving countries, calling them to minimize the negative consequences of migration;

UNIFY our efforts to displace, as the core of the migration agenda, the issue of security and to place instead the issue of recognition and protection of all human, political, economic, social and cultural rights and promoting a peaceful coexistence, which recognizes the primary role of migration in the integral development of sending and receiving societies, thus avoiding the criminalization of migrants as a way of regulating migration flows;

PLACE development as the heart of our joint activities, which means attacking the root causes of forced migration and to move towards:

- a) eradication of extreme poverty;
- b) the creation of decent jobs;
- c) coherence in migration policies;
- d) respect of free movement of persons;
- e) commitment to the migrant, which is both a personal and institutional responsibility;
- f) the adoption of principles of cooperation, solidarity and fraternity as guidelines for a peaceful coexistence;

PROMOTE activities to eradicate all forms of violence, both institutional and from organized crime, as well as any form of racism, xenophobia, discrimination or abuse, in the societies of origin, transit and destination of migrants, rising above the walls of altero-fobia and building the bridges of altero-filia;

JOIN FORCES so that countries of destination ratify international conventions and treaties on migration, especially the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members their Families

RECOGNIZE that migrants are the key players in building bridges of international peaceful coexistence;

CONSIDER always the migrant as the center of every policy, action, law, convention, or project on migration issues.