

Holy See: Respect for Immigrants' Rights Aids Host Nation Official Addresses U.N. Commission on Population Issues

NEW YORK, APRIL 5, 2006 (Zenit.org).- The Holy See considers that respect for immigrants' human rights is also an important benefit for host countries. Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Holy See's permanent observer to the United Nations, expressed this conviction today when addressing the session of the Commission on Population and Development of the Economic and Social Council. The topic was on "National Experience in Population Matters: International Migration and Development."

Addressing the situation of the world's estimated 191 million migrants, the papal representative explained that "as the population generally grows older in the developed world, the phenomenon of migration is being examined in a different light." "Although it is a historic and ubiquitous phenomenon, efforts to shape it and control it by political and legal means have not always led to happy results," Archbishop Migliore, 53, noted. In fact, "sometimes it is painted as a threat and is manipulated for short-term political gain, at the expense of the most natural rights of all human beings -- the right to life, to citizenship, to work and to development," the prelate observed. However, "for receiving countries, the net economic impact of international migration is said to be generally positive," the Holy See official said. "Although the presence of international migrants may have a small adverse effect on the wages of non-migrants or may raise unemployment when wages are rigid, such effects are usually small at the national level. "Over the medium and long term, migration can even generate employment and produce net fiscal gains. Studies in rapidly ageing populations indicate that migrants can contribute substantially to relieving the fiscal burden on future generations." Detrimental On the other hand, Archbishop Migliore noted, "the emigration of skilled personnel can be detrimental to the development prospects of countries of origin, especially small developing countries losing high proportions of skilled citizens. However, skilled migrants who maintain ties with their countries of origin may stimulate the transfer of technology and capital." Because of "low fertility, net migration counts for three-quarters of the population growth in developed countries and, by 2030, migration may account for all population growth in those countries," the archbishop said. "Therefore," he continued, "migration is no longer an economic question or one to be examined just from the point of view of its consequences for sending countries. The question on the other side of the equation, the social impact of migration on receiving countries with shrinking birthrates, now needs to be better understood as well. "Demographic shifts in populations on such a scale will surely have radical consequences for the entire composition of nations, and so a balance has to be struck between the evident benefits of migration on the one hand and a consideration of the social impact of large numbers of migrants in receiving countries, especially when they are not yet integrated, on the other." The nexus Archbishop Migliore added: "Furthermore, there seems to be a growing awareness that immigration cannot be the single solution to demographic and labor problems of receiving countries." He concluded: "The World Summit Outcome document rightly acknowledged the nexus between international migration and development and the need to deal with the

challenges and opportunities that migration presents to countries of origin, destination and transit. "It is to be hoped that the resolve expressed by all the world's leaders to take measures to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of migrants, migrant workers and members of their families will be built upon, to the benefit of all peoples without distinction."

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