



SOVRANO MILITARE ORDINE OSPEDALIERO
DI SAN GIOVANNI DI GERUSALEMME DI RODI E DI MALTA

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“Moving beyond emergencies – Creating development solutions to the mutual benefit of host and origin communities and displaced persons”

Introduction

Never has the strong link between migration, displacement and development been as clear and evident as it is today. The number of people displaced by conflict has reached an all-time high. Displacement is not only induced by widely visible wars that are ever-present and ubiquitous, such as the conflict in Syria. Displacement is also induced by reasons often forgotten and neglected in public perceptions. Despotic regimes, religion or race based persecution, climate change causing draughts, contamination of the soil, lakes and rivers are all playing a role in the movement of people across the planet. Therefore, drivers of migration are far beyond the usual “displacement by war narrative”, and reducing this issue to war and conflict falls dramatically short of the dynamic that is behind migration and mass exodus.

Furthermore, apart from the Middle East Crisis, the majority of people who are forced to flee come from developing countries. It is equally important to realize that around 85 % of the hosting countries are developing countries. Therefore, when the developed world speaks of “refugee streams”, or “refuges crisis”, this is a perceptual illusion.

The migration issue has been widely debated and although this document contains no new elements to the discussion, the **Sovereign Order of Malta makes the following four recommendations:**

1) Promote collaboration between key country players

The 2007-2008 economic crises in the U.S. and in Europe generated wide discontent in the Western world. This unrest was exacerbated by the anti-establishment, nationalist and xenophobic movements, which rose quickly in many European states. Migration flows coming from South America, Africa and from the Middle East, were perceived as further threats to the stability and wellbeing of the developed world.

Governments have adjusted to the general sentiment. The result of this change of attitude is clearly seen when comparing the section on migration of the 2016 G7 final statement, with the recent 2017 one. In this last one, security aspects (borders control, law enforcement, returns to the countries of origin, national interest and national security of the State) represent the key elements, whereas the previous G7 final declaration contained a much stronger humanitarian approach. We need to be realistic and acknowledge that the humanitarian organizations are obliged to operate in this new political environment, which poses challenges in the implementation and delivery of policies placing the protection of human rights and humanitarian principles as key.

Clearly, states alone cannot manage such a global phenomenon. Migration policies require a comprehensive approach carried out by credible coalitions of States (EU) and multilateral and organizations working on the field, adopting coordinated policies. Unfortunately, in the current scenario it is not realistic to aim for a consensus of the 27 EU countries. This is why it appears necessary that a small group of leading countries - who for dimension, experience and exposure to migration – are in a position to forge a comprehensive migration policy, keeping the door open to other countries willing to join at a second stage.

Germany and Italy already actively cooperate to stimulate the European Commission to take action in the field of migrations and against the trafficking of human beings directed to the coasts of North Africa to cross the Mediterranean. Germany has developed an extraordinary experience in the last decades with migrations coming from the East and the South. Italy is on the frontline for the influx of migrants coming from Africa through Libya. Other member States, like France, Spain and Greece, are equally exposed and could form, with the first two mentioned, a credible coalition to tackle the issue of migrations from Africa, both at a development level and at the humanitarian level.

2) Ensure coherence of all migration related policy fields

Solid and efficient development solutions need to address all displacement factors and need to be synchronized with foreign policy, diplomatic activities, security policy, trade and investment, economic policies for the developing countries, human rights and environmental policies. Simply linking international with national policies is not enough. In this context, the adoption of **resettlement policies** for refugees should be jointly enhanced and, wherever already present, should be reinforced to ensure legal and physical protection to each individual.

Likewise, **family reunification policies** should be further developed and strengthened. Refugees separated from their families suffer tremendous stress and anxiety, leading often to long lasting consequences. Restoring and protecting family unity is also a vital pillar for a successful integration into the social fabric since the family usually represents a source of emotional stability and support.

It is vital to ensure that all these procedures are carried out in a coordinate way across Europe, and in a reasonable and acceptable time frame.

3) Invest more in enhancing capacities of local civil society and aim at translating programs into concrete action at a local level

The tendency of the international aid sector to invest mainly in large-scale programs often prevents the implementation of solutions on a community level. Strengthening regional and local capacities and partners is one the best ways to build up community resilience, to mitigate conflicts, and, in the medium term, even to prevent conflicts. To this end, the cooperation with partners must be strictly based on shared values of democracy and human rights.

So far international development aid has not succeeded in protecting the environment and in exploiting natural resources in a reasonable way and- especially in Sub Saharan Africa- in creating an economic and social environment attractive for a growing potential labor force. The lack of good governance has opened the way to human, drug and weapon trafficking.

International aid has tried to address these gaps through massive global or sectoral structural programmes but often at the expenses of complementary local community development projects. The experience of the Order of Malta has shown that without translating large projects into smaller scale operations, any aid programme loses efficiency and – in the end - is doomed to failure.

The worldwide relief agency of the Order of Malta, Malteser International, takes the commitment to support local actors very seriously and channels over one third of its budget through local organizations. In addition, it is member of the Core Humanitarian Standard alliance, which sets out Nine Commitments that organisations involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. It also facilitates greater accountability to communities and people affected by crisis.

4) Enhance anti- trafficking policies

The contrast to human trafficking and to the human rights violations connected to it is a priority. Large flows of migrations have proved to induce human trafficking and new forms of slavery. The Order of Malta, besides saving lives at sea in the Mediterranean, on board of Italian Coast Guard ships and assisting hundreds of thousands of migrants in Europe, considers human trafficking a growing priority and intends to strengthen its commitments to tackle this phenomenon, at a diplomatic as well as an operational level.

Prevention and law enforcement are needed against human trafficking, which is often linked with transnational crime to control territories and fund other illegal activities. The victims of this practice are minors and women, the most vulnerable among migrants. Increasingly more children leave their countries alone, which exposes them to all kinds of abuses. Sexual abuse and forced prostitution have become a frequent practice. Beyond law enforcement, one of the better ways to hinder human trafficking would be to create legal and safe avenues for refugees and migrants.