

## **Fourth Annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-Based Organizations in International Affairs**

The thematic focus for this year's symposium held at the United Nations, January 22, 2018, room 4, was 'Perspectives on Migration: Displacement and Marginalization, Inclusion and Justice'. The symposium was organized by the World Council of Churches and partners, and co-sponsored by the UN Office of Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, and others.

The symposium addressed cooperation among faith-based organizations, UN system entities, and other engaged regional and international non-government entities, and focused on the intersections of these themes with human mobility, migration and displacement.

### **Partial Remarks - Deputy Secretary-General, Ms Amina J Mohammed's remarks to Fourth Annual Symposium**

“Not since the Second World War have so many people fled their homes to seek a place of greater safety. Some 66 million people -- half of them children -- have fled armed conflicts, persecution, poverty, climate change and natural disasters and are now refugees or displaced within their own countries.”

During the symposium, it was noted that Faith-based organizations around the world are found on the frontlines of crises, providing food, shelter, education, and medical and psychological support to migrants and refugees, and the suffering of migrants and refugees is extreme. On top of the trauma they may have suffered at home, thousands die in transit, trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea or the Sahel to reach Europe, or by travelling through Central America to reach the United States.

In Asia, hundreds of Rohingya Muslims have died on land and sea trying to escape violence and persecution in Myanmar. Migrants and asylum seekers are often easy prey for human traffickers and other criminals. Extreme violence has been committed against them.

Many Africans are being sold as commodities in Libya. Such serious violations and abuses of human rights may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity and those responsible should be held accountable.

Political prejudice, intolerance and xenophobia against refugees and migrants is pervasive in all regions. Some countries that had pledged to support refugees are reneging on their commitment.

While the media focus tends to be on the developed world, it is important to remember that almost 90 per cent of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries. Just eight countries host more than half the world's refugees.

Far from being the threat that they are sometimes portrayed to be, it has been said that refugees and migrants contribute to the growth and development of host countries as well as their countries of origin. We need to do more to inform the world of the positive story of migration, and to ensure a responsible and proportionate response from media and policy makers to migration challenges.

It is important to speak out against discrimination and intolerance, and counter those who seek to win votes through fear mongering and divisiveness. With their strong focus on justice, human rights, strong institutions and peaceful societies, the Sustainable Development Goals provide a powerful framework.

The prevention platform that the Secretary-General is establishing aims to strengthen the United Nations' work to prevent conflict resolve disputes peacefully and address violations of human rights before they escalate. In 2018, we have an excellent opportunity to advance on these issues.

In agreeing to a Global Compact on Migration and a Global Compact on Refugees, Member States will be recommitting to their legal and moral obligations. It is important that they identify concrete areas for international cooperation to maximize the benefits of migration, overcome the challenges and ensure that migration is undertaken in a safe, orderly and regular manner.

To that end, the Secretary-General shared his report 'Making Migration Work for All', which serves as an important document for the forthcoming negotiations **and is attached.**

In summary, the fourth annual symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith Based Organizations in International Affairs did not offer much news when compared to the Third Annual Symposium.

Submitted by:

Rachel Elizabeth Chardon  
General Program and Administrative Officer  
*Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations*