



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN MOBILITY CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

Climate change has become a major concern for the international community. Over recent years, specialists and policy-makers have studied its impact on human mobility. Nevertheless, there is limited knowledge and uncertainty about the extent of the phenomenon, and doubts about the international legal framework to be applied. The lunch debate COMECE organised on 21 October 2015 aimed at raising awareness of the potential challenges that climate induced mobility of persons represents for the international community and the appropriate answers to this phenomenon, including policy-related ones. The exhibition “Moving Stories”, displayed in the conference room, presenting individual testimonies on the impact of climate change worldwide assisted the event.

Climate change and its consequences can be analyzed from different perspectives (political, legal, economic, moral, and scientific). Prof. Kjeld Rasmussen (University of Copenhagen) described the scientific models that suggest the dimension of future changes in temperature and rainfall in the world, emphasizing that climate change is not the only motivation to migrate, but there are mixed causes and factors. He addressed the current overemphasis in the security dimension of the problem of climate change and the moral implications of the phenomenon (inter-generational and inter-generational justice; anthropocentric vs. “ecocentric” rights perspective). Prof. Rasmussen recalled that, in spite of the general perception that environmental transnational degradation provokes conflicts amongst neighbouring states, in reality this rarely happens.

Ms Jo de Backer (IOM-Brussels) spoke of the work and approach of IOM in the issue of “environmental migrants”, suggesting that the use of other expressions such as “climate refugees” could be misleading. She insisted that there are several causes that force people to migrate, not only the change in climate. She highlighted that in the migration debate, human beings are at the centre, and that migration should be seen mostly as a positive and effective adaptation strategy in case of situations forcing people to leave their homelands. The work of IOM aims to prevent forced migration, to give human face to the debate, to make advocacy, research, capacity building and awareness rising, and to assist operationally displaced persons.

The exhibition “Moving Stories”, displayed in the conference room, was presented bringing a sober look through testimonies from all over the world “that the degree of human intervention, often in the service of business interests and consumerism, is actually making our earth less rich and beautiful, ever more limited and grey, even as technological advances and consumer goods continue to abound limitlessly. ” (Pope Francis, “Laudato Si” 38). We gratefully acknowledge the kind permission to use the publication of the Climate Outreach and Information Network (for more information please consult: <http://www.climateoutreach.org.uk/portfolio-item/moving-stories-climate-and-migration/>)

José-Luis Bazán (COMECE Secretariat)