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Message of the Holy Father to the President of the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (Parlatino) on the occasion of the 33rd General Assembly (9-10 June, Panama)

The following is the Message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the President of the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (Parlatino), Ms. Blanca Alcalá, on the occasion of the 33rd General Assembly (9-10 June) on the theme: "High Level Parliamentary Dialogue on Migration in Latin America and the Caribbean: Realities and Commitments towards Global Compact":

Message of the Holy Father

To Ms. Blanca Alcalá
President of the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament

Madam President,

On the occasion of the Forum "High Level Parliamentary Dialogue on Migration in Latin America and the Caribbean: Realities and Commitments towards Global Compact", I greet you as President and, along with you, all who will take part in this event. I congratulate you on this initiative that aims to help and make life more dignified for those who, having a homeland, regrettably do not find in their countries adequate conditions of security and subsistence, and are compelled to migrate to other places.

From the title of your meeting I would like to highlight three words, which invite reflection and work: *reality*, *dialogue* and *commitment*.

First, *reality*. It is important to know the reason for migration and what characteristics it presents in our continent. This requires not only analysis of this situation from "the study desk", but also in contact with people, that is to say with real faces. Behind every emigrant there is a human being with a history of his own, with a culture and ideals. Aseptic analysis produces sterile measurements; on the other hand, a relationship with a person in the flesh helps us to perceive the deep scars that he carries with him, caused by the reason, or the unreason, of his

migration. This meeting will help to provide valid responses for migrants and host countries, as well as ensuring that agreements and security measures are examined from direct experience, observing whether or not they conform to reality. As members of a large family, we must work to place the “person” at the centre (cf. *Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 9 January 2017); this is not a mere number or an abstract entity but a brother or sister who needs our help and a friendly hand.

Dialogue is indispensable in this work. One cannot work in isolation; we all need each other. We have to be “capable of leaving behind a throwaway culture and embracing one of encounter and acceptance” (Message for the World Day of the Migrant and the Refugee, 2014). Joint collaboration is necessary to develop efficient and equitable strategies for the reception of refugees. Achieving a consensus between the parties is a “craft”; a meticulous, almost imperceptible task but essential for shaping agreements and regulations. All elements must be offered to local governments as well as to the international community in order to develop the best pacts for the good of the many, especially those who suffer in the most vulnerable areas of our planet, as well as in some areas of Latin America and the Caribbean. Dialogue is essential to foster solidarity with those who have been deprived of their fundamental rights, as well as to increase willingness to accommodate those who flee from dramatic and inhuman situations.

In order to respond to the needs of migrants, *commitment* is needed from all parties. We cannot dwell on the detailed analysis and the debate of ideas, but we are forced to give a solution to this problem. Latin America and the Caribbean have an important international role and the opportunity to become key players in this complex situation. In this effort, “there is a need for mid-term and long-term planning which is not limited to emergency responses” (Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 11 January 2016). This serves to establish priorities in the region also with a vision of the future, such as the integration of migrants in host countries and assistance in the development of countries of origin. To these are added many other urgent actions, such as care for minors: “All children ... have the right to recreation; in a word, they have the right to be children” (Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2017). They need our care and help, as do their families. In this regard, I renew my call to stop human trafficking, which is a scourge. Human beings can not be treated as objects or commodities, for each one carries with him the image of God (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 197-201).

The work is enormous and we need men and women of good will who, with their concrete commitment, can respond to this “cry” that rises from the heart of the migrant. We can not close our ears to their call. I urge national governments to assume their responsibilities to all those residing in their territory; and I reiterate the commitment of the Catholic Church, through the presence of the local and regional Churches, to responding to this wound that many brothers and sisters of ours carry with them.

Finally, I encourage you in this task that you are carrying out, and I implore the intercession of the Holy Virgin. May She, who also experienced migration in the flight to Egypt with her spouse and her Son Jesus (*Mt 2: 13*), keep and sustain you with her maternal care.

Please, I ask you to pray for me; and I ask the Lord to bless you.

Vatican City, 7 June 2017

FRANCIS
