

Holy See to UN: Refugees Have Talents to Offer

Says Sending People Back Isn't a Solution

GENEVA, JUNE 30, 2010 (Zenit.org).- The Holy See delegation to the United Nations is urging the further protection of refugees, emphasizing their value as human persons, with talents and gifts to offer.

Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Holy See's permanent observer at the U.N. offices in Geneva, stated this in a June 22 address at the 48th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

"Refugees and forcibly displaced people have talents and capacities to offer and show as well the advantages of building together a common future," he pointed out.

The prelate expressed support for the agency's "intense effort" to "call attention to, to refine and to advance the priority of extending increased protection to refugees and persons of concern."

"It is a timely response," he noted, "since conflicts have been displacing more people and forced return of potential asylum seekers gives evidence of a difficult political environment for uprooted people."

The archbishop observed that in the past year, 43.3 million people were considered to be "of concern" to the U.N. refugee agency, "the highest number since the 1990s."

"The right course of action is continuing the enlargement process of categories of people to be protected as the international community has progressively included them in the mandate" of the U.N. High Commissioner, he exhorted.

Inappropriate

Archbishop Tomasi continued: "Today's 'boat people' from Africa, Asia and elsewhere cannot simply be towed back to the port of origin of their journey as if distancing their presence would offer a real solution.

"Similarly, the automatic resort to detaining potential refugees and asylum seekers -- often in appalling conditions -- is inappropriate."

He emphasized the need to combine "safety, respect of human dignity and human rights."

"The responsibility we owe to vulnerable groups of our one human family prompts adequate answers to remedy the violation of rights and to assist the victims," the prelate stated.

"The same sense of coherence needs to drive States in translating into appropriate protection services the commitments they have assumed," he asserted.

The archbishop added that "in the final analysis one cannot say that a state has met its responsibility when persons of concern are left in a state of destitution."

He affirmed that "a culture of friendly human interaction in our globalized world can nourish further solidarity."