



Final Statement of the European Mayors' Summit

Europe: Refugees are our Brothers and Sisters



The European cities we represent are clusters of towns that existed even before their respective nations, many of them even before Christianity, such as Athens and Rome, Valencia, Zaragoza, Barcelona, Malaga, Palermo, Naples, Mytilene (Lesbos) and Lampedusa. Some of these cities have been able to create forms of coexistence and acceptance that today are models to imitate: Athens, for example, is at the origin of modern democracy; Florence is a leader in the abolition of the death penalty. In general and following the message of Christ, being European also means recognising each person's human dignity and freedom, with peace as the supreme good.

When dealing with our obligations towards refugees, we must remember the ways in which we organized ourselves in cities first and subsequently as nations during the course of history. The great cities of Europe – as well as those of the Americas and Asia – which now face the worst crisis of displacement since World War II, must continue to collaborate in good faith, trust, hope, friendship, harmony and justice, to embrace humanity, integration and solidarity.

This European awareness, present in the representatives of cities, points to the need of creating a network of Mayors capable of conceiving welcoming cities as shelters, capable of organizing safe and regular humanitarian corridors within the European Union, recognized by the international community, and capable of expressing solidarity. Mayors, collectively empowered, could better exercise their responsibilities in a more harmonious way with regional, national and international levels of government.

This new network must be centred on human encounter and based on a progressive vision of

interculturality, with the active participation of civil society – including the third sector – and of the religious traditions, where the defence and promotion of human dignity, freedom, justice, integration and peace must prevail over the debates of our prejudices. It must look to a common future of building bridges rather than concentrating on diversity as in the past.

The new network of Mayors should promote solutions for victims of modern slavery and human trafficking in terms of forced labour and prostitution, and organ trafficking.

The network should contribute to restoring a sense of justice and opportunities to the disenfranchised, to unemployed youth and those who have suffered economically because of the persistent demand for cheap, subcontracted labour. This implies implementing, on the part of the States, a broad program of social spending on health, education, training, redundancy pay and family support, financed through the closing of tax havens. It also involves granting Greece debt relief, in the hope of ending the protracted Eurozone crisis.

Humanitarian aid to the dispossessed, animated by the spirit of charity and the ethics of care, must be informed and aided today by the new academic and scientific discoveries in the fields of health, including mental health, trauma, education and well-being.

War and terror, poverty, growing inequality, climate change, degradation and environmental catastrophes are behind the largest forced displacement in human history: more than 65 million human beings.

This highlights the absolute need to move from a strategy based on defence and war to one focused on sustainable and integral development, especially in the case of the most advanced countries. Walls will never suppress the search for security, dignity, well-being and peace. Cities must build bridges of love, charity, solidarity, good faith, trust and hope. Bridges to heal our refugee brothers, our refugee sisters, our refugee children and thus heal and reinstate our common humanity for the betterment of our fellow human beings.