

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ahead of the informal EU Summit at Salzburg

JESUITS APPEAL:

Don't fight migrants, but migration root causes

Nairobi/Nuremberg/Munich/Vienna: On July 31, 2018, Jesuit heads from Germany, Austria, and Africa addressed a letter to the Austrian EU Presidency, Foreign Secretary Dr. Karin Kneissl titled “*Flows of migrants, flows of money*”. They protested against any narrative depicting migrants as a threat to Europe’s stability and prosperity. They pointed out instead, to a correlation between migration to Europe, and the exploitative financial flows that are doing the same. So far, this letter has not received any reply.



“Currently there is more money leaving Africa in illicit financial flows through aggressive tax evasion and money laundering, than is, entering Africa in combined Developmental Aid and Foreign Direct Investment. If Europe would support African governments in curbing those outflows, African states could secure much more funds for investing in infrastructure, education, and healthcare. This would, in the long run, keep Africans in Africa and ultimately curb illegal migration,” says Fr. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator SJ, president of the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM).

Complex problems call for complex solutions

We need to be aware that by 2035, about 450 million young Africans will need jobs, whereas, probably only a little more than 110 million jobs will be created. Even now the majority of young Africans are without gainful jobs. In the wake of such a crisis, the Internet and social media have given human traffickers a new platform to recruit and lure desperate victims enticing them with an availability of jobs and welfare abroad.

Lowering this potential for outmigration and human trafficking requires more than border fortification and development aid. Therefore we make the following observations:

- The best way to deal with illegal migration is to give more access to transparent legal options. Here we argue that the present legal migration options between Africa and Europe have to be reviewed and mutual win-win options should be given more attention.

- For example, there is need to pay attention to the benefits of remittances from immigrants. There is evidence to show that currently financial remittances from migrants are far more substantial than all official developmental aid. And furthermore remittances do not benefit corrupt structures but go immediately to families and have a considerable potential to decrease poverty and spark off small investments. Their positive effect could be even more beneficial if states would finally honour their long-standing commitments to put in measures to reduce or even waive international money transfer fees.
- There is need to continue to support private sector development in Africa in order to enhance job creation through increased investment. Aid is good but increased investment (including that coming from remittances) both domestic and foreign direct investment, is even better. At the same time, provisions must be put in place to ensure that any form of investment benefits all stakeholders involved - investors, workers and communities - and that social and environmental standards are kept and businesses honour their tax obligations.

At the same time, it is important to be aware that Africa is not a monolith and African countries are not homogenous. Fr. Orobator SJ points out that: “It is said that Africa is the continent of opportunities. But we need a differentiating debate. While for some states with good governance FDI is the road to more prosperity, for states with poor governance, remittances are paramount for the survival of many.”

African-Europe Cooperation

In the fight against illegal migration, Europe and Africa need more cooperation at various policy levels. The Jesuit Provincials of Germany and Austria, Frs. Johannes Siebner and Bernhard Bürgler add: “We perceive a lot of mutual benefit in developing and deepening relationships, for example, those based on a fairer trade system and exchange of technology versus one-way natural resources extraction or even balancing the demographic decline in Europe with demographic growth in Africa. Europe and Africa are in fact bound together as signatories to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Climate Accord, to the forthcoming Global Compact on Migration and several other accords. All this has to be transferred into pragmatic and binding political and legal instruments for mutual benefit. We, Jesuits, are willing to help build bridges so that this will come about. These are topics worth discussing at the forthcoming informal EU Summit in Salzburg; not border fortification, abandonment of the ‘Sophia’ mission, the closing of harbours, deportations or establishment of regional reception centers in North Africa.”



In conclusion and most importantly, all migrants are human beings and deserve respect due to their common human dignity. We see this dignity violated in North African Transit countries, at the crossing of the Mediterranean without finding safe havens when accommodated in overcrowded refugee camps. Here we support Pope Francis' call early this year in his message to mark the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees to increase and simplify the process of issuing of humanitarian visas, most importantly for those seeking family reunification or trying to escape violence and natural disasters.

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The letter is attached to this Press Release. A Backup-Factsheet attached to the letter can be downloaded at <http://tinyurl.com/KneisslBackup>

Society of Jesus in Africa and Madagascar serves just under 160M Catholics in Africa in various ministries like education, accompanying refugees through the Jesuit Refugee Service, social justice through the Social Apostolates, and solidarity with people and communities affected by HIV/AIDS and generally advocating for basic Human Rights.

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