



**CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES**  
**Office for Refugee Policy**

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*13<sup>th</sup> December 2004*

**CHURCHES' REFUGEE NETWORK**  
**STATEMENT ON MIGRATION REPORT**

On 8<sup>th</sup> July 2004, the House of Commons International Development Committee issued the report, "Migration and Development: How to make Migration work for Poverty Reduction".

In view of the report's progressive and challenging content, the Churches' Refugee Network held a Round Table Discussion at Westminster Abbey, after which they issued this statement:

The Churches' Refugee Network welcomes the publication in July 2004 of the House of Commons International Development Committee Report, 'Migration and Development: How to Make Migration Work for Poverty Reduction'.

We are grateful that on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2004, two members of the Committee (Tony Baldry MP, Chair of the Committee, and Tony Colman MP) joined us in a 'Round Table' discussion of the report at Westminster Abbey.

We have learned much from this carefully argued report, which makes positive recommendations in a number of key areas.

As members of a Christian churches, we recognise that the Christian faith has been spread through patterns of migration. We look, with Jews and Muslims, to the migrant Abraham as one of the great exemplars of faith. We believe the churches should remind British people of the ways in which British culture and life has been established and enriched by migrants to these shores.

We welcome the report's careful study of migration, both within and between countries, and support its call for more research in this area. We believe the relationship between migration and development (which we see as the promotion of a wider 'human flourishing' than mere economic prosperity) in countries of origin has to be examined with great care – as this report begins to do.

However, we remain concerned about the extent to which global recruitment to meet the needs of rich nations such as Britain pressurises family and community life in countries of origin, and deprives developing nations of skilled personnel. We share the dissatisfaction the report expresses with controls over recruitment of healthcare personnel from developing countries. We support the recommendation that patterns of 'circular' (time-limited) migration, with opportunities for the acquisition of skills in receiving countries, be promoted.

We welcome the emphasis the report places on involving DFID in the revision and development of UK policies concerned with migration. We hope that new lines of inter-departmental co-



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operation ('joined-up government') can be devised to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of the positive migration policies, suggested in the Report.

We again stress the need to ensure that the rights of migrant workers are adequately protected: that they are treated as human beings and not merely as economic units. While there is a body of international law, not to mention national legislation, that aims to do this, the lack of specificity about migrants' entitlements has been a major stumbling block in the protection of their human rights.

The 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant workers and Members of their Families fills this gap but, while it has achieved over 50 signatures or accessions, none have been from the major industrialised countries which are the main users of migrant labour.

The Churches' Refugee Network regrets that no EU country has ratified the Convention, especially as it is generally agreed that EU countries will continue to need migrant workers. We therefore call on the UK Government to work within the EU for the ratification of the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers.

We recognise that the reasons for migration (voluntary and involuntary) are complicated: 'Migration cannot be divorced from the wider international system of economics and politics that shapes the lives of poor people'. The cruel reality is that political persecution and economic oppression frequently overlap. Often people flee from economic conditions which derive from failures of the political process. This should be recognised in the interpretation of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. We most strongly urge the UK Government to maintain its commitment to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and to ensure that its proposals to manage – and in selected cases foster – migration do not compromise the support and protection afforded to asylum seekers.

This is a report which presents voluntary migration in a positive light and seeks to address the needs of involuntary migrants. It takes forward a discussion too often dominated by the brutal rhetoric of the popular press. The Government's response is expected soon. There will be a debate in the House of Commons early in the New Year. We therefore urge church members to study it and to make their views on the issues it raises known to relevant ministers, their MPs and their church leaders.

The Churches' Refugee Network is an informal network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

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