



Lampedusa Ecumenical Statement

from the International Conference “Living and witnessing the border” Sept. 30th – Oct. 3rd 2017

We are Christians of different traditions from Europe and the United States meeting in Palermo from 30 September to 2 October 2017 to reaffirm our commitment to welcoming migrants and asylum seekers. Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants, we have ecumenically carried out reception activities, paying close attention to the concerns and the proposals made by experts and civil society representatives who have contributed to our debate.

On 3 October, we have reached Lampedusa to remember the victims of the 3 October 2013 shipwreck during which 368 migrants perished a few sea miles from the coast. After the conclusion of these meetings and commemoration, we will return to the churches and ecumenical entities in which we are engaged and make the following plea.

Sisters and brothers, we should always remember that protecting and welcoming migrants and refugees is at the centre of our faith in Christ, and these values are the core Christian message that we are being called to announce. We should remember that according to the gospel message that feeds our faith, migrants and refugees who live among us have fundamental rights that cannot be restricted or denied for our benefit or in the name of our national interests.

We should remember that every wall that separates us from our neighbour and stops those who flee from persecution and violence, takes us away from the love of the Lord and our vocation to welcome and protect, as He has welcomed and protected us. Brothers and sisters, we renew our commitment to provide places of welcome and aid, places of safety and hope so that people can rebuild their lives after suffering the wounds of war, persecution and hunger. We also invite migrants to bring their gifts, experiences and voices to make our churches more open and caring for all. This is why we oppose any policy of closure or change of the borders to prevent or deny access to men and women who would be entitled to international protection.

This is why we now appeal to our governments and international institutions to ensure safe passages and humanitarian corridors for refugees, asylum seekers and those living at risk or under conditions of vulnerability. We ask those who are political decision makers to become aware of new economic, political, military and environmental factors that push people to flee towards more stable and wealthy countries, and to ensure a humane and more inclusive interpretation of the right to international protection and asylum.

This is why we express our support for policies of stabilization and economic support to countries that today are unable to guarantee the survival and growth of many of their citizens. And this is why we wish to call on our churches to reach out to governments and authorities to implement more human and open policies for the refugees, to build bridges as instruments of solidarity and signs of hope. This is why we call on the help of the Lord to support us in serving our neighbour knocking on our borders.