

# Vatican Aide Considers Situations of Migrant Women

## Urges Governments to Offer Special Protections

SALY, Senegal, DEC. 5, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The president of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers is urging the international community to pay more attention to the situation of migrant women.

Archbishop Antonio Vegliò said this last week at an international forum organized by Caritas Internationalis on the theme "The Feminine Face of Immigration," which took place Nov. 30-Dec. 2 in Saly.

"The international community does not yet pay sufficient attention to some basic questions" linked to the migration of women, he stated, noting in particular the lack of "universal laws" that address the special labor and health care needs of mothers.

The Church, the archbishop stated, "invites governments to review the politics and the norms that deal with the protection of basic rights, such as the fight against abuses in the workplace, above sexual abuses, access to sanitary services, shelter, nationality, reunification of families and assistance for young mothers."

Before 100 representatives of the Caritas confederation, other Catholic charitable organizations and migration experts from 50 countries, Archbishop Vegliò stressed the Churches commitment in this area

"She will continue to fraternally welcome migrants who arrive from sister Churches, sharing the wealth of diversity with them and announcing together the Gospel through the word and action," he said.

"In the perspective of a ministerial and missionary Church that is more attentive to the laity, the adequate presence and service of women must be better promoted, recognized and valued," the archbishop observed. "It is a question of recognizing her specific function in a Church project in which man and woman, with their particular and complementary gifts and tasks, can better realize themselves according to God's plan in Christ."

## Challenges

The prelate then underscored the developing dimensions in female immigration, who constitute a larger workforce than men in some countries, and offered an analysis of the situation of many women migrants in the world.

"Often they are employed in illegal work, without basic human rights, and sometimes they suffer

abuse in the domestic sphere," he said.

Archbishop Vegliò then noted that many sell their own bodies and that "the annual income from prostitution is estimated to be around \$12 billion, the third most profitable illegal activity in the world after drug and arms trafficking."

He also warned about human trafficking, remarking that "about 4 million women are sold annually into prostitution and slavery, and almost 2 million minors between 5 and 15 are involved in sex trafficking."

The majority of migrant women, he claimed, "do not have the support of a normal family; generally she is separated, divorced or a widow."

He said that, furthermore, "many women given into the relatively easy practice of abortion, which explains a large exposure to psychological trauma."

The plans and the dreams to create a family and have children," he stated, "unfortunately become ever more difficult in migration because of the economic precariousness and the repercussions of premature maternity."