Committee on Migration Issues OEA/Ser.W

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CONCEPT NOTE

IV THEMATIC SESSION: "RESPONSES BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY   
IN THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO, AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF,   
MIGRANT POPULATIONS IN THE REGION,"

TO BE HELD ON FEBRUARY 27, 2020

(Prepared by the Chair of the CAM with support from the Technical Secretariat)

In recent years, significant flows of migrants and refugees in the Americas have tested the capacity of transit and destination countries to receive and respond to these populations. Salient cases include the following:

1. Massive flows of migrants and refugees from Venezuela. As of December 2019, 4.8 million Venezuelans had left their country[[1]](#footnote-1)/, of whom at least 80 percent have settled in South American countries over the past four years. The intensity and magnitude of migration by Venezuelans in such a short period of time makes this the greatest migration and refugee crisis ever to face the region and one of the world's largest displacement crises.
2. Migrants and refugees from Nicaragua, particularly since April 2018. Between April and September 2019, a total of 96,996 Nicaraguans had left their country; of these, 76,781 went to Costa Rica.[[2]](#footnote-2)/
3. Migration, displacements, and masses of refugees from the countries of Northern Central America, including El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by mid-2019 a total of 386,480 persons from these countries had sought refuge in other parts of the world.[[3]](#footnote-3)/ Migration has also been increasing in recent years, reflected in the number of detentions conducted by the United States Border Patrol; these totaled 851,508 by the end of fiscal 2019, compared with 396,579 at the end of fiscal 2018.[[4]](#footnote-4)/ Over 50 percent of these detainees came from Northern Central America.[[5]](#footnote-5)/
4. Constant migration and forced displacements of Haitians to other countries of the region, owing to various circumstances Haiti has experienced in recent years. Over two million Haitians reside outside their country, especially in the Dominican Republic, the United States, Canada, Cuba, The Bahamas, Brazil, Chile, Jamaica, Mexico, and Turks and Caicos.[[6]](#footnote-6)/

Notable among the challenges posed to countries of transit and destination as a consequence of these phenomena are:

1. The need to provide adequate humanitarian assistance to populations of migrants and refugees traveling through or settling in their territories in conjunction with other civil society actors and the international community. This includes access to emergency medical services, food assistance, access to housing and shelter, access to legal protection and information, protection of and assistance to persons who have been victims of violence and trafficking, etc.
2. The need to facilitate the socioeconomic integration of populations arriving in their countries, while combating increasing discrimination, racism, xenophobia, social unrest, and public safety issues.

The countries of the region have taken various measures to address these weighty challenges, including: institutional changes and reforms at the national and subnational levels to modernize systems that aid and attend to migrant populations in addition to collecting data; new legal avenues to facilitate regularization of the status of migrants, including special residency permits; changes to make applying for asylum and refugee status more expeditious and efficient; establishment of new forums for dialogue with civil society organizations, the private sector, and the various state actors, so as to facilitate the economic and social integration of migrants and refugees; training officers at the various levels of government to better attend to migrant populations and prevent discrimination, racism, and xenophobia; and establishing new means of coordination and dialogue at the national, subregional, and regional levels, so as to better respond to the migration and refugee crisis.

Considering all the measures they have adopted to date, the countries of the region have chosen creative solutions during the crisis.[[7]](#footnote-7)/ Nevertheless, as migration continues to swell, the challenges are exceeding their financial resources and institutional capacities. In order to continue their efforts, the countries most affected need the support of international institutions and donors, who are in turn overextended in response to the various crises on the world stage.[[8]](#footnote-8)/

**Support from the international community: Unprecedented efforts in the region**

Some analyses say that countries in the region have not received resources at the level provided in other areas of the world to address humanitarian crises stemming from unprecedented growth in migration and refugee flows.[[9]](#footnote-9)/ Still, the international community has taken important measures to channel financial, material, and human resources to supporting the region's governments. The cases are many. Just a few examples follow:

1. **United Nations Agencies**. In order to mount the most effective possible response to the challenges posed by the crisis of massive migration of Venezuelans, including refugees, on April 12, 2018, the UN established the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform, comprising 17 UN agencies headed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Also participating are 15 civil society organization, five donors, two international financial institutions, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).[[10]](#footnote-10)/ The platform also has been replicating itself in each country, which means that at least 170 actors collaborate through various working groups on this regional response. Between January and December 2019 alone, a total of $738 million were requested through this platform by Colombia ($315.5 million), Ecuador ($117.3 million), Peru ($106 million), Brazil ($56.6 million), the Southern Cone as a whole ($35.7 million), the Caribbean region ($34.8 million), and Central America and Mexico ($21.7 million), as well as for regional initiatives ($49.7 million).[[11]](#footnote-11)/

Contributions come to this platform from countries around the world, many from private donors, and are assigned to the various agencies and organizations participating.[[12]](#footnote-12)/ The matters to which these funds are assigned include direct emergency aid, protection, socioeconomic and cultural integration of migrants and refugees, strengthening the host governments' response capacity, and regional activities.

1. **World Bank.** In 2016, the World Bank established a fund known as the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF), in conjunction with the United Nations and the Islamic Development Bank, to support middle-income host countries that have been broadly impacted by massive flows of migrants and refugees from other countries. The purpose of the fund is to give these countries access to concessional credits normally reserved for low-income countries. In particular, the fund has benefited Jordan and Lebanon, which have received a large number of refugees from Syria. Nevertheless, in January 2019, Colombia, which has been especially impacted by large flows of migrants and refugees from Venezuela, was added to the list of countries that can be helped by the fund, while Ecuador has also applied to be added.[[13]](#footnote-13)/ The fund's resources come from donor countries such as Canada, Denmark, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and from the European Commission.[[14]](#footnote-14)/

The initial funding received by the Colombian Government through the GCFF includes a credit of $31.5 dollars for a $750-million project entitled Second Fiscal Sustainability, Competitiveness, and Migration Development Policy Financing Project.[[15]](#footnote-15)/ The resources will be used for immigrant registration, raising awareness in host communities to promote integration of migrants and refugees, provision of basic services to this population, and building state capacity to respond to migration and refugee flows through legal reform, decrees, regulations, and other institutional measures.[[16]](#footnote-16)/

1. **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).** Like the World Bank, the IDB Board of Governors in 2019 approved the use of its special-situation credit platform to facilitate the integration of migrants in host communities throughout Latin America. Through its platform the IDB will provide $100 million, in addition to other loans through resources offered by various international donors. The IDB credits will support national and local governments in implementing development programs to facilitate the economic and social integration of migrants and refugees.[[17]](#footnote-17)/

After this initiative was launched, the Government of Spain announced that it will give the IDB $5 million to support IDB-directed projects geared toward the registry and documentation of migrants, access to basic services of quality, including water, sanitation, and solid waste management, education, health, and other social activities. They will also be used to create economic and job opportunities and to build government capacity to implement effective public policies on migration and social inclusion.[[18]](#footnote-18)/

1. **European Union**. In response to the humanitarian crisis stemming from the growing number of migrants and refugees leaving Venezuela, the European Union has donated €170 million.[[19]](#footnote-19)/

Of these, €70 million are allocated to meeting the needs of Venezuelans in their own country, such as access to emergency medical services, safe drinking water, sanitation, and education. One hundred million euros are allocated to direct humanitarian assistance to populations of migrants and refugees, especially in border areas (€34 million) of transit and host countries; to supporting local governments directly in their measures to promote the socioeconomic inclusion of these populations and their acceptance in the host communities (€16 million); through a contribution (€10 million) to the IDB program to strengthen the fiscal and spending capacities of local governments so as to facilitate access to housing and the labor market for migrants and refugees; for the identification and documentation of migrants and refugees; and for fighting human trafficking, discrimination, and xenophobia.

These European Union funds are in addition to the €3.6 billion the EU has provided to Latin America and the Caribbean overall as a form of cooperation for development. They are channeled to issues directly linked to the causes of migration from various countries of the region, especially those of Northern Central America. These include security and the rule of law, environmental sustainability and responding to climate change, agriculture, food security and nutrition, inclusive economic growth, public-sector modernization and reform, and facilitating regional integration.[[20]](#footnote-20)/

The European Union also announced, in October 2019, that in early 2020 it would convene a meeting of Friends of the Quito Process, comprising various countries of the region, to respond to challenges arising from the massive flows of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, as a way to help those countries and attract more resources from the international community.[[21]](#footnote-21)/

Drawing from these and other examples, this session will be devoted to reflection on the challenges posed to countries of the region by various migration and refugee crises, and on the various measures the international community has adopted to support them. Aiding in this endeavor will be experts in the field, including representatives of donor countries and international organizations.

Member states will have opportunities to speak. A special invitation is issued to transit and host countries affected by the various migration and refugee crises in the region to discuss the challenges they face and their experiences with the support they have received from international organizations and donors.

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2. . United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Infographic on the number of persons forced to flee, prepared by the 2nd annual meeting of the MIRPS, November 8, 2019, Mexico City, Mexico. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. . United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Infographic on the number of persons forced to flee, prepared by the 2nd annual meeting of the MIRPS, November 8, 2019, Mexico City, Mexico. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. . See: U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Southwest Border Migration Fy2019 and FY2018. Available at: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/sw-border-migration/fy-2019>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. . In fiscal 2018, 57 percent of persons detained by the border patrol came from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. Data by nationality are not yet available for fiscal 2019. Mexico remains the country with the highest number of detainees of a specific nationality, although the volume of flows from Mexico has been dropping since 2007; so the number of persons arriving to the United States from Mexico is very low when compared to the number of detainees from Mexico in prior decades. Also, since more people return to Mexico than arrive in the United States, net Mexican migration to the United States is negative; this is still not the case in terms of migration from Central America. See: U.S. Border Patrol, Nationwide Apprehensions by Citizenship and Sector FY2007-2018. Available at:

   <https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2019-Mar/BP%20Apps%20by%20Sector%20and%20Citizenship%20FY07-FY18.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. . World Population Review 2019. Available at: <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/haiti-population/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. . Selee, Andrew et al. *Creativity amid Crisis: Legal Pathways for Venezuelan Migrants in Latin America.* Migration Policy Institute. Policy Brief, January 2019. Available at:

   <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/legal-pathways-venezuelan-migrants-latin-america>. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. . Ferris, Elizabeth. *Too Many Humanitarian Crises, Not Enough Global Resources.* Op Ed. Brookings. July 30, 2014. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/too-many-humanitarian-crises-not-enough-global-resources/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. . Bahar, Dany and Strauss, Sebastian. *Neighbor nations can’t bear costs of Venezuelan refugee crisis alone.* Op ed. Brookings. March 7, 2018. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/too-many-humanitarian-crises-not-enough-global-resources/>. See also Bahar, Dany and Dooley, Meagan. *Venezuela refugee crisis to become the largest and most underfunded in modern history.* Brookings Institution. December 9, 2019. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/venezuela-bolivarian-republic/venezuela-refugee-crisis-become-largest-and-most-underfunded>. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. . Response for Venezuelans Coordination Platform. Last updated December 5, 2019. Available at:

    <https://r4v.info/en/situations/platform>. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. . UNHCR. *2019 Regional Refugee and Migrants Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela.* Available at: <http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/21600>. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. . Amounts donated by country are shown at: UNHCR. *2019 Regional Refugee and Migrants Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela.* Available at: <http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/21600>. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. . Global Concessional Financing Facility, 2019 annual report. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. . Global Concessional Financing Facility, 2019 annual report. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. . Global Concessional Financing Facility, 2019 annual report. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. . Global Concessional Financing Facility, 2019 annual report. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. . *IDB approves grant funds for countries receiving migrants in Latin America and Caribbean.* May 7, 2019. Available at: <https://www.iadb.org/en/news/idb-approves-grant-funds-countries-receiving-migrants-latin-america-and-caribbean> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. . *Spain makes contribution to IDB’s Migration initiative.* March 20, 2019. Available at:

    <https://www.iadb.org/en/news/spain-makes-contribution-idbs-migration-initiative>. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. . European Union External Action. *EU Supports Venezuelan Refugees, Migrants and Host Communities.* Brussels, October 28, 2019. Available at: <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/69487/EU%20supports%20Venezuelan%20refugees,%20migrants%20and%20host%20communities> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. . European Union External Action. *EU Supports Venezuelan Refugees, Migrants and Host Communities.* Brussels, October 28, 2019. Available at: <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/69487/EU%20supports%20Venezuelan%20refugees,%20migrants%20and%20host%20communities> [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
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