COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION ISSUES OEA/Ser.W

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CONCEPT NOTE

THEMATIC SESSION:

“SPECIAL MIGRATORY SITUATIONS IN THE REGION”

(July 2021)

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

According to the most recent estimates by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in 2020 there were approximately 281 million international migrants in the world, a figure equivalent to 3.6% of the world's[[1]](#footnote-1)population. This figure shows the global increase in the number of international migrants over the past five decades: the total number of people living in a country other than their home country in 2020 is 128 million higher than the 1990 figure and more than triples that of 1970.

Various political, economic, territorial, social, environmental, and geographical factors have been decisive in the migratory dynamics that have been present throughout the history of the American continent. Currently, the region experiences multiple migratory dynamics that deserve special attention due to their magnitude, their prolonged nature over time and their characteristics, such as:

1. Venezuela's migration dynamics to most countries on the continent, as well as to countries on other continents.
2. The migratory epidemics from countries of the so-called Northern Triangle of Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras) and Mexico, which are mainly directed to the United States.
3. The migratory dynamics from Nicaragua to Costa Rica and other countries in the region.
4. The dynamics in the migratory corridors that go from Panama to the United States in which mixed migratory movements of people from Cuba and Haiti are evidenced, as well as the transit of extracontinental migrants.
5. The dynamics of internal displacement and transnational migration in Colombia.
6. The migratory dynamics of Andean countries (Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador) to countries of the Southern Cone (Argentina and Uruguay).
7. The migratory dynamics of Haiti to the Dominican Republic and other countries in the region.
8. Cuba's migratory dynamics to the United States and other countries.
9. The dynamics of migration from Caribbean countries to other countries, largely as a result of natural disasters and the impacts of climate change.

***The Venezuelan migration dynamic***

For most of the twentieth century, Venezuela was a receiving country for migrants from other countries in the region, mainly from Colombia because of its geographical proximity. However, in the twenty-first century it has changed radically and in recent years the dire humanitarian situation has forced millions of Venezuelans to move to other countries. According to the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants of Venezuela (R4V Platform), led by UNHCR and IOM, as of 5 July 2021, there were 5,649,714 people in the world, of whom 4,603,441 were in Latin American countries and the Caribe. This has become one of the world's major displacement crises," according to UNHCR.

In order to respond to the situation of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, the countries of the region have adopted various measures to provide access to migratory regularization, recognition of refugee status (under the classic definition of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or under the expanded definition of the Cartagena Declaration of 1984), as well as measures for the socio-economic integration of these persons.

At the regional level and in order to promote shared responsibility, initiatives have also been developed such as the Quito Process, the R4V Platform, and at the OAS level there is the JOINT OAS-UNHCR Unit on Refugees and Forced Displacement of the Department of Inclusion, the Rapporteurship on the Rights of Migrants of the IACHR and the Office of the OAS General Secretariat to address the crisis of Venezuelan migrants and refugees. The Quito Process integrates 11 Latin American countries participating in order to facilitate the movement of Venezuelan citizens, refugees and migrants, in addition to urging the Venezuelan government to issue identity and travel documents for its nationals. In the R4V Platform, nearly 200 organizations (including United Nations Agencies, civil society, faith-based organizations and NGOs, among others) have coordinated their efforts under the Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela in 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Within the framework of these regional initiatives, it is also important to highlight the International Donor Conferences in Solidarity with Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants, the first held in October 2019 in Brussels and the second in June 2021, under the leadership of Canada in collaboration with UNHCR and IOM. In the framework of this latest conference, donors pledged more than $1,500 million in grants and loans to help migrants from that country fleeing a humanitarian crisis, as well as their host nations and vulnerable people still in Venezuela.

***The*** ***dynamics*** ***migrations*** between ***Central America, Mexico and the United States***

Living conditions characterized by poverty, food insecurity, lack of opportunities, violence by armed groups, gangs and drug cartels, as well as natural disasters and the impacts of climate change have led to the forced migration of more than one million people, mainly in northern triangle countries (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) and Mexico. [[3]](#footnote-3)The above figure includes internally displaced persons, asylum-seekers or refugee and refugee status, but does not include a broader group of migrants, many of them in an irregular migratory situation. A large number of these people migrate to the United States in search of protection and better life opportunities.

From 2018 to date, thousands of people from Central American countries have migrated to the United States through so-called migrant caravans. Between January and May 2021, in a context where the COVID-19 pandemic still has serious impacts on countries in the region, IOM’s Human Mobility Information Management Initiative in the Northern Triangle estimated that 44,928 people from this area had returned to their countries of origin after migrating.[[4]](#footnote-4)

On the other hand, the migration of Nicaraguans to Costa Rica has been a historical dynamic between these two countries. However, as of April 2018, more than 100,000 Nicaraguans have migrated to Costa Rica.

Also in Central America, extra continental migrants arriving from Africa and Asia to Latin America cross the Darien plug, on the border between Panama and Colombia, most of them passing through their final destination in the United States or Canada. On their way through the jungle area of the Darien Stopper, migrants are exposed to multiple dangers, abuse, sexual violence, or die or disappear in the jungle in conditions of famine, dehydration and where they are exposed to the weather, snake bites or other dangers.

In response to this situation, Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama and El Salvador are working together to implement the Comprehensive Regional Framework for Protection and Solutions (MIRPS), a pioneering initiative in the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. The current Pro Tempore Presidency of MIRPS is headed by Guatemala. The Technical Secretariat of MIRPS is composed of UNHCR and OAS.

In addition, since 1996, the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM)has been created, which is an intergovernmental forum established to hold dialogue and the exchange of ideas, as well as experiences for joint reflection and cooperation on migration issues of common interest to the participating countries. La CRM has 11 member states that are: Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic. The current Pro Tempore Presidency of the RCM is in charge of Mexico. The TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT of the RCM is led by IOM.

Recognize the multiple migratory situations that are evident in the Americas is of vital importance to the Commission on Migration Affairs, because it offers states the opportunity to learn about experiences that allow them to formulate effective public policies for regular, orderly, safe migration in line with human rights obligations.

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1. **IOM.***World Migration Report 2020*

   [*https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2020-interactive/?lang=ES*](https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2020-interactive/?lang=ES) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. R4V. *WHAT IS #PLATAFORMAR4V?*

   <https://www.r4v.info/es/home> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. UNHCR *UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner calls for urgent support for one million displaced Central Americans and action to address causes of displacement*. May 15, 2021. Available at: <https://www.acnur.org/noticias/press/2021/5/60a26f9d4/la-alta-comisionada-adjunta-de-acnur-pide-apoyo-urgente-para-un-millon.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *NTMI.* *Regional returns information*

   <https://mic.iom.int/webntmi/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)