During two days, prosecutors and police personnel from Ecuador and Colombia gathered in the first bi-national border meeting held in Esmeraldas.

This conclave was held for the purpose of exchanging experiences and information about the characteristics of organized crime on their shared border in order to reinforce their activities to combat criminal actions such as drug traffic, fuel smuggling, trafficking and smuggling of persons, trafficking in weapons and narcotics.

On the first day of the meeting, three work groups were formed on different topics regarding criminal issues affecting the two countries.

The representative of the International Organization for Migration in Ecuador, Rogelio Bernal, considered that it is important to learn the characteristics and determine the forms of crime in their diverse manifestations, to make it possible to implement actions to prevent and counteract crime.

His presentation also referred to one of the most common crimes in the border zone, which is trafficking in persons, and said that this is a very complex issue for those who are responsible for enforcing the Law.

Cecilia Armas, representative of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Ecuadorian Government, said that the main goal of the meeting was to coordinate joint investigation work in order to combat organized crime.

Another issue scourging the provinces along the border is the crime of trafficking in persons and to eradicate it proposed training for prosecutors, police personnel and judges. Other supervisory entities will also be incorporated, such as migration, health care and non-governmental organizations, for the purpose of generating networks for prevention and integrated care for victims.

At the end of the bi-national meeting, commitments were signed, including solutions and conclusions contributing to counteracting organized crime is it happens along the Colombo-Ecuadorian border.
ECUADOR AND COLOMBIA WILL DISCUSS REFUGEE ISSUES WITH UNHCR AND IOM

The governments of Ecuador and Colombia will meet in the first quarter of 2013 with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to analyze the status of refugees in Ecuador, announced the Ecuadorian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Foreign Office stated that the meeting is part of a plan for “integrated care” planned for refugees and to promote their “voluntary return” in the case of Colombian citizens.

UNHCR and IOM will backstop the initiative, which also aims to ensure “respect and promotion” of refugees’ rights in Ecuador, the country with the most people who are refugees in Latin America, said the Ministry.

IOM PARTICIPATED IN EDUCATIONAL FAIR LATINO AUSTRALIA 2013

UNHCR and IOM signed an agreement to undertake joint activities to contribute to local integration of people in need of international protection, by constructing or improving educational infrastructure, shelters or systems water and sanitation systems. This will make it possible to improve access to basic services and will help people in need of international protection exercise their rights and the communities hosting them along Ecuador’s northern border.

The International Organization for Migrations participated in the Latino Australia Educational fair held in Quito on Tuesday, 29 January, in the Hilton Colon Hotel.

This event is held annually to promote graduate studies – master’s and doctoral degrees – in Australia.

The Fair was attended by hundreds of students, ages 18 to 35.

IOM’s participation in Expo Studies Australia 2013 made it possible to promote the Program for Travel Fair Assistance for Migrants and Students, which facilitates persons’ mobilization by providing airfares with discounts of up to 50%, on the basis of agreements that IOM has with several commercial airlines.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

IOM Ecuador has participated actively with the UNCT, specifically with UNDP, in preparation for consultation about the post-2015 Development Agenda. Accordingly, a series of workshops will encourage debate among Ecuadorian stakeholders and the migrant community, to elicit contributions and ideas to generate a shared world view of the future we want.

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MEMBERS OF THE CAN ANALYZE MIGRATORY AGREEMENTS TO BENEFIT FREEDOM OF MOBILITY IN THE REGION

The Andean Committee of Migration Authorities met in Quito to further migratory agreements guaranteeing effective application of migrants’ and tourists’ right to move around freely within the Community of Andean Nations (CAN). The meeting also discussed approval of the Andean Human Development Plan for Migrations (PADHM).

Delegates from Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, and of the General Secretariat of the Community of Andean Nations (CAN) were present at the Meeting of the Andean Committee of Migration Authorities (CAAM).

The meeting sought bi-national migratory agreements to enforce the right to mobility and migrant’s rights as workers, said CAN President, Genaro Baldeón, who chaired the inauguration.

The commitment was announced to make a general proposal in this area, with collaboration by IOM.

The IOM delegate commended the invitation to participate in this meeting and highlighted the value of the major outcomes to be achieved. He underscored the Andean normative framework, as well as the feeling of belonging and exercising Andean citizenship.

The Peruvian Delegation outlined IOM support for the various activities to be held in that country in the course of this year.

NEW YEAR’S GREETINGS

The Head of Mission of IOM Ecuador, Rogelio Bernal, met early this year with several authorities of the Ecuadorian Government, in order to discuss aspects regarding migration and refuge, and to analyze the work agenda for 2013.

The main meetings included Lorena Escudero, National Secretary for Migrants, who thanked him for IOM’s openness, and stated that, in the quest for materializing shared goals.

Ecuador has been working on a smooth relationship of cooperation and transparency with the Organization. She added that this all entails challenges, risks and responsibilities, but also immense possibilities for success in the different programs.

She stressed the importance of the contribution and the rapport currently generated by Ecuador in its relations with the International Organization for Migration.

TECHNICAL MEETING BETWEEN UNFPA AND IOM REPRESENTATIVES

The IOM has been holding meetings, in its preparations for the second high-level dialogue on international migration and development, called by the United Nations General Assembly.

The IOM Head of Mission and the Representative of the United Nations Population Fund in Ecuador visited the Under Secretary for Migratory, Consular and Refugee Affairs to offer Ecuador their cooperation in preparing for that event.

The meeting reviewed documents prepared to date including Resolution 1244 by the IOM Council as well as the United Nations General Assembly’s Resolution. Both organizations offered technical advisory assistance to their governmental counterparts.