Three Chilean Mayors travelled together with IOM Chile representatives as part of the International Visitor Leadership Programme (IVLP) sponsored by the State Department, for purposes of sharing good practices related to the social inclusion of migrants. The objective of the IVLP Program is to share first-hand knowledge regarding society, culture, and policies in the United States, by connecting foreign leaders with U.S. colleagues.

Mayors Rodrigo Delgado (Central Station), Juan Carrasco (Quilicura), and Daniel Jadue (Recoleta) participated in the exchange, which was organized by the United States Embassy in Chile and held in Houston, Texas, and Providence, Rhode Island. The main purpose of the exchange was for the Chilean Mayors to learn about the experiences of Houston and Providence in creating local policies concerning the social inclusion of migrants. The participants also discussed the advances and challenges related to their local initiatives in Chile on issues such as migrant health, education, and employment. The exchange of best practices served to support and strengthen municipal efforts to improve the self-sufficiency and integration of migrants and reinforce the country’s public policies on social inclusion.

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IOM Chile Participates in Conference Organized by Association of Manufacture Exporters

The Annual Breakfast held by the Association of Manufacture Exporters (ASEXMA) took place on Thursday 29 March, bringing together MSME manufacture exporters based in Chile, public officials, and private-sector leaders for one of the most important events of its kind.

The speakers this year were Tomás Flores, economist and former Under-Secretary of the Economy, Felipe Lopeandia, Head TPP Negotiator from the Chancellery’s Economic Directorate (DIRECON), and Alex Alarcón, Migratory Policy Expert from IOM Chile. The event was inaugurated by Roberto Fantuzzi, President of ASEXMA, who stated that, “It is flattering that (migrants) choose to live in Chile.”

Alex Alarcón, an IOM expert on migration and health, spoke about issues related to the political agenda with a focus on migration and human rights. He highlighted the ‘stigmatization of migration,’ since it is commonly believed that where there are more irregular migrants, more should be deported, when actually the opposite should be true, with efforts being made to normalize their status. The issues of vulnerability and discrimination were also mentioned, with it being shown that the migrant population actually represents a contribution, since they mainly come to work, and their income levels are not as low as many people think.

For IOM Chile, this event is highly relevant, as it forms part of a joint project with the private sector to address the issue of migration in Chile in an objective and professional manner. The ASEXMA Breakfast is the first public event on the project’s agenda, with new initiatives expected to take place during the remainder of 2017.

IOM Chile Facilitates Return of Haitian National

Through the Humanitarian Assistance for Stranded Migrants (HASM) programme, IOM Chile helped Lesly Alphonse, a Haitian national, to return to his country. The programme offers assistance to migrants who do not have the economic means nor access to other institutional assistance to return to their country of origin.

Lesly, age 35, came to Chile in February 2016 intending to work. Only seventeen days after arriving in the country, however, he was admitted to El Carmen Hospital in Maipú due to a hypertensive crisis that soon developed complications, including kidney failure (frequently a terminal condition), a stroke, and cardiac arrest. He was at vital risk in the Critical Patients Unit.
Mayor Rodrigo Delgado of Central Station, Mayor Juan Carrasco of Quilicura, and Mayor Daniel Jadue of Recoleta Talk about their Trip to the United States with the IOM

The exchange programme organized by the United States Embassy in Chile took place in the cities of Houston, Texas, and Providence, Rhode Island, where Rodrigo Delgado (Mayor of Central Station), Juan Carrasco (Mayor of Quilicura), and Daniel Jadue (Mayor of Recoleta) learned about experiences related to migrant health, education, and employment.

Official figures indicate that the migrants living in the Municipalities of Recoleta and Central Station represent 11.8% and 4.7% of the respective general populations. Most of these migrants are originally from Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Haiti, Ecuador, and Venezuela.

“In Quilicura equality is not a slogan, but a right, and so everyone who comes to our city is treated with the same opportunities,” states Juan Carrasco, Mayor of Quilicura. “For us, there are no immigrants or Chileans, but just people, and we are all equal. Learning about the experiences of Providence and Houston has allowed us to continue working hard to defend the rights of all migrants who have chosen to live in our city.”

For Rodrigo Delgado, Mayor of Central Station, “The trip was a very good experience. The United States is reaching a turning point with respect to migration, not just because of political issues, but also due to economic reasons. In Chile we are seeing a situation similar to that seen in the United States 30 or 40 years ago, when many families arrived seeking the American dream. Now our country is seeing a wave of migration attracted by economic opportunities, where people seek to improve their condition and their income and attain a better quality of life. As such, it was very interesting to learn about the processes and how migrants and refugees have been assimilated into the United States, how social services have developed, and everything that has to do with the comprehensive guidance provided to migrants. We were exposed to highly innovative ideas, such as the comprehensive support that migrants receive to find employment, ranging from training to job interview techniques, and even a ‘social store’ where they can obtain clothing that is appropriate for job hunting.”

“We are interested in applying that model in our Ideactive Labor Center. The invitation was very beneficial for all involved, because our hosts were also able to learn about our projects and experiences. This clearly enriches perspectives.”

Norberto Girón, IOM Chile Chief of Mission, pointed out how important it is for two destination countries to have this kind of exchange, for the following reasons: “Recognizing and valuing the contribution of the migrant community to the economic and multi-cultural development of the destination country. In addition, learning about new initiatives and strategies to improve migration management at the local level. Finally, supporting local authorities with the synergies that allow migrants to contribute positively to cities and strengthen ties with the migrant communities.”

Mayor Daniel Jadue of Recoleta affirms that, “One of the challenges facing us today as a society is the need to improve our relationship with migrants. This means turning our differences into a source of cultural wealth, and learning from their customs, habits, and traditions, thus giving us a much closer perspective to understand the contribution they can offer to our community, helping us to develop new integration projects. Another debt we have with our migrant neighbors is the right to decent housing, along the lines of improving basic services. While it is true that subsidy policies exist, there is still much to be done, as is the case with healthcare and education.”

It is important to highlight the importance of the efforts made by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to establish ties with the private sector. A case in point is the alliance with Delta Airlines, making it possible to strengthen relations between Chile and the world, thus collaborating with the Organization’s mission.

Delta’s Sales Manager in Chile, Jorge Triviño, states that, “Giving back to the communities where Delta’s employees live, work, and serve has been part of our company’s culture and values for over eighty years. In this case, it was an honor to participate in this initiative to promote the social inclusion of migrants as led by the IOM, a strategic partner for Delta Airlines in Chile.”
The Municipality of Lo Prado held a meeting on 30 March as part of the Migrants and Cities Programme for purposes of carrying out a collaborative effort on issues related to migration. The speakers included Fernando Cejudo, Head of the city’s Migration Office, Félix Martínez from the IOM, and Branislav Marelic, Director of the National Human Rights Institute, who spoke on the topic of migration and human rights.

The event also included a round-table discussion among Migration Office representatives from the Municipalities of La Reina, Quilicura, Central Station, Peñalolén, Maipú, and Quinta Normal. The participants discussed the different situations in their communities, with particular emphasis on the efforts of the Lo Prado Municipality to contribute to the migrant community.

IOM Chile and Catholic University of Maule Sign Cooperation Agreement

The Mission in Chile of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Catholic University of Maule (UCM) established the bases and guidelines for joint efforts by way of a Cooperation Agreement, which was signed on Tuesday 07 March in Talca, Maule Region, by IOM Chile Mission Chief Norberto Girón and University Rector Dr. Diego Durán.

The signing of this collaboration agreement between the IOM and the Catholic University of Maule includes the commitment to work together in several areas of cooperation involving migration, such as carrying out joint research projects, seminars, and talks for both professors and students, as well as developing training and continuing education programmes to benefit personnel from both institutions.

The Agreement will also allow mechanisms to be established by which the IOM, within the framework of its Travel Assistance Programme, can help students, professors, and professionals who travel from and to Chile for academic purposes.

In the words of IOM Chile’s Chief of Mission, the signing of this Agreement “makes clear the intention of both institutions to move forward on a joint task with full and close collaboration. We are convinced of the importance of this first step, which will allow us to advance towards the goal of building a more fair and inclusive society.”