

**REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON MIGRATION (PUEBLA PROCESS)
IX MEETING**

Panama City, Panama, May 20-21, 2004

DECLARATION

The Ninth Meeting of the Regional Conference on Migration, made up of the Vice Ministers of Canada, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States of America, held in Panama City on May 20-21, 2004 stressed the importance and usefulness of this mechanism, which constitutes a space for frank and open dialogue and for the making of decisions to take concrete action with regard to the migratory phenomenon in the region.

The Vice Ministers reviewed the various aspects of the migratory phenomenon, taking as a premise the importance and priority that the topic of migration has acquired worldwide and its interaction with other areas such as development, security, health, and trade.

They expressed the need for the Puebla Process to continue being strengthened and consolidated as a regional forum, and consequently agreed to:

- Continue working toward the establishment and consolidation of special measures that will allow unrestricted respect for the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migratory status and paying special attention to vulnerable groups such as women and children.
- Strengthen and increase our cooperation in an effective manner to combat the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, and to make the migratory flows more orderly and our borders secure.
- Bring closer together and strengthen the mechanisms of coordination, training, and exchange of information among our authorities and establish procedures to guarantee that the repatriation of migrants will be accomplished in a safe, dignified, and orderly manner.
- Promote contact with other regional and world forums with links to the topic of migration, at which we may jointly, as a region, present our interests and concerns.
- Express satisfaction over the progress achieved with regard to the creation of an area of free movement of persons among the countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

In order to achieve implementation of these objectives, the Vice Ministers made the decisions listed in the attached document.

They thanked the Government of Panama for its hospitality and excellent organization and direction and the Government of Canada for its offer to serve as the venue for the X Meeting of the Regional Conference on Migration.

DECISIONS OF THE VICE MINISTERS

The Vice Ministers decided to:

1. Express appreciation for the participation of Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru as observers, as well as that of the following international organizations: the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC/CELADE), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the Protection of the Rights of Migrants of the UN Human Rights Commission, and the Central American Integration System (SICA).
2. Thank the Regional Network of Civil Organizations for Migration (RNCOM) for its constructive contributions, underlining that in order to strengthen the existing space for dialogue, it is important that its interlocutors represent the range of interests of civil society and that its interventions be based on objective information.
3. Thank the Presidency Pro-Tempore of the South American Conference on Migration, held by the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, for its participation, as well as the Government of the Republic of Argentina, which represented the Ad-Hoc Working Group in charge of setting up the Inter-American Program for the Promotion and Protection of the Human Rights of Migrants and the Members of their Families within the framework of the Organization of American States (OAS).
4. Endorse the document "Strengthening the Regional Conference on Migration: Eight Years After its Creation," which is aimed at serving as an important tool for the functioning of the work of the Puebla Process. Thank the delegations from Canada and Mexico for this initiative and for the quality of the contents of the document.
5. Endorse the documents entitled "Guidelines for the Establishment of Multilateral and/or Bilateral Mechanisms among the RCM Member Countries on the Topic of the Return of Regional Migrants by Land" and "General Framework for Implementation of the Program on Multilateral Cooperation for the Assisted Return of Extra-Regional Migrants Stranded in Member Countries of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM)" that were prepared by Mexico, with the collaboration of the IOM, and presented during the Workshop held in El Salvador on December 1, 2003.
6. Accept the offer from Canada and Mexico to hold a seminar on "Migration and Health" and to approve its holding in Mexico during the fourth quarter of 2004.
7. Approve the participation of the Presidency Pro-Tempore in the Regional Workshop that will be held by the Global Commission for International Migration in Mexico in 2005 to inform it about the way the RCM operates and the progress this Conference has made on the topic of migration.
8. Urge the member countries to strengthen internal legislation on the topic of migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons paying special attention to vulnerable groups. Remind States that still have not done so about the

importance of signing and/or ratifying the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its two Protocols on Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons.

9. Recognize that international cooperation and the exchange of information is indispensable to effectively combat smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons.
10. Urge member countries to develop assistance and social reinsertion programs for victims of trafficking in persons and other vulnerable persons affected by this illegal activity.
11. Recognize that the problems caused by "maras" are another form of transnational organized crime and must be approached from a viewpoint of regional migratory cooperation in order to bring about effective action to combat them.
12. Approve the budget of the RCM Technical Secretariat (TS) for the period January 1 through December 31, 2005, in accordance with the proposal presented by the Presidency Pro-Tempore.
13. Authorize the TS to gather information regarding policies that facilitate the flow of remittances in each of the member countries according to the terms agreed upon at the Extraordinary Summit of the Americas.
14. Continue joint training exercises on land borders of RCM member countries regarding border security and consular protection aimed at migration officials, police forces, and personnel in charge of consular protection.

Specifically, recognize the value of the trips along the border made by the Government of Mexico, with the participation of consular officials accredited in that country, which has provided an overall view of the dynamics of the migratory flows on the northern and southern borders of Mexico, as well as the training in matters of consular protection, which are offered by the Matías Romero Institute of Diplomatic Studies of the Secretariat of Foreign Relations of Mexico.

Likewise, urge the RCM countries to direct their consular representatives to participate in such events.

15. Modify the "Terms of Reference for Contracting Personnel of the Technical Support Unit (TSU)" approved at the VII RCM with regard to the selection of personnel as follows:
 - a. Contracting of the Coordinator of the Technical Secretariat will be approved by the Vice Ministers of the RCM for an initial period of one year, which may be extended for a maximum of two additional years;
 - b. Contract extensions will depend on the result of performance evaluations to be made by the Vice Ministers at the end of each contract year, based on the report to be submitted by the Presidency Pro - Tempore; and

- c. The vacancy in the position of TS Coordinator will be communicated directly to the RCM Vice Ministers at the beginning of the last year of the maximum period or immediately, when circumstances require.
16. Express recognition for the work done by Mr. Gerard R. Pascua and the excellent performance in his role as RCM TS Coordinator.
 17. Approve the appointment of Mr. Luis Eduardo Monzón Méndez as the new RCM Technical Secretariat Coordinator.