

TENTH MEETING OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON MIGRATION (RCM)

Vancouver, Canada, 10-11 March 2005

DECLARATION

The Tenth Meeting of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) was held in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, on March 10-11, 2005, with the participation of the Vice-Ministers of Canada, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States of America.

In celebrating the tenth anniversary of the first Vice-Ministerial Meeting of the RCM held in Puebla, Mexico in 1996, the Vice-Ministers expressed their commitment to continuing to strengthen the principles of the Puebla Process, to reaffirming the spirit of cooperation and open dialogue among its member states, and to engaging, in its capacity as a successful regional consultation process, in the broad international discussion on migration.

Member states highlighted the importance of the Tenth RCM theme of "Integration and Citizenship" in ensuring that migration is a successful and positive phenomenon through which the economic, social and cultural aspirations of both migrants and host societies can be fulfilled. The Vice-Ministers also recognized the importance for governments to work with the private sector and civil society to achieve better integration of immigrants, taking into account the vulnerable situation in which some migrants find themselves.

The Vice-Ministers acknowledged and encouraged efforts made by countries of the RCM to promote the dignified, orderly and safe return of migrants to their places of origin.

The Vice-Ministers emphasized the importance of combating trafficking in persons in the region and reiterated the commitment of member states to undertake efforts to eliminate this terrible scourge, highlighting the importance of prevention, prosecution of traffickers, and the protection of and assistance to victims.

The Vice-Ministers reaffirmed the importance that RCM member states place upon the international protection of refugees and their commitment to the fulfillment of international principles of human rights and asylum.

Therefore, Vice-Ministers agreed to the following:

DECISIONS

1. The Technical Secretariat was thanked for its report on the technical and financial activities carried out and the operational budget for 2006 presented at the RCGM was approved.
2. Countries that have not done so were urged to make their outstanding contributions in order to cover the budgets approved in the Vice-Ministers' meetings.
3. The contract renewal of the current RCM Technical Secretariat Coordinator was approved.

4. The participation of Canada, as Presidency Pro-Témpore, and of the Technical Secretariat of the RCM in the Workshop on Regional Processes to be held in Geneva in April 2005, co-hosted by IOM and the Global Commission on International Migration, was approved.
5. The RCM document that Canada, as Presidency Pro-Témpore, will present at the Regional Hearing of the Global Commission on International Migration to be held in Mexico in May 2005 was approved.
6. The participation of the RCM Presidency Pro-Témpore in the United Nations High Level Dialogue on Migration to be held in the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2006 in order to present the best practices and lessons learned in the RCM was approved.
7. The use of the RCM Reserve Fund earmarked for the Dignified, Safe and Orderly Return of Regional Migrants by Land to pay for Air transport in exceptional circumstances, and the use of the proposed form, to be completed jointly by the IOM and the requesting country, were approved.
8. Acknowledging the importance that RCM member states assign to combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons, the United States was thanked for its contributions to the IOM to carry out an awareness campaign on the risks of smuggling migrants and trafficking in persons and for training officials in the region to this end.
9. Mexico was congratulated for the design and operation of the Integrated System on Migration Operations (SIOM), and thanked for its willingness to share this technical experience for the development of similar systems in member countries of the RCM.
10. The creation of a Working Group on Migration and Health, which will report to the Liaison Officer Network for Consular Protection and serve as a liaison mechanism for communication and virtual coordination was approved. The Technical Secretariat will create a space in its Virtual Secretariat for this purpose. The RCGM was directed to create guidelines for the objectives, operation and scope of this working group.
11. The Government of Canada was thanked for the cooperation provided to Costa Rica and Nicaragua relating to the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, enabling those two countries to reach a preliminary agreement between them in this area.
12. RCM Member States were encouraged to carry out, insofar as possible, training for migration and police officers on human rights presented by the U.N. Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of Migrants.
13. The carrying out of a workshop in Nicaragua on the standards and issuance of passports in RCM Member States based on the results of analysis of the information from questionnaires submitted was approved and the IOM was urged to seek funding for the execution of this project in 2005.

14. IOM was requested to provide technical assistance to implement the proposal of Panama to carry out an event on the drafting of migration legislation for those RCM Member States currently drafting or approving new migration laws and wishing to participate.
15. The Government of El Salvador was congratulated for its initiative to hold a seminar-workshop on "Migration and the Private Sector," to be held in San Salvador, under the auspices of the RCM, during the first week of December 2005. Also, the Government of Mexico was thanked for agreeing to co-sponsor this event.
16. The Governments of Costa Rica and Canada were congratulated for their initiative to hold in San Jose, Costa Rica, a Seminar on migrant integration in receiving countries, on the 23rd and 24th of June 2005.
17. The Government of Honduras was thanked for its report, given in its capacity as President Pro-Tempore of the Central American Integration System (SICA), on the progress in the Central American Passport and "One Visa" initiatives, which will facilitate the free movement of people in the area and reinforce distinctiveness and integration in the region.

Also, the Vice-Ministers:

Thanked the Regional Network of Civil Society Organizations (RNCOM) for its participation and the presentation of its proposed projects. Also, they congratulated RNCOM for the creation of a website and technical secretariat.

Acknowledged the participation of observer countries and international organizations: Peru and Colombia, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC/CELADE), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of Migrants of the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

Congratulated the Government of El Salvador for offering to assume the next Presidency Pro-Tempore of the RCM and host the XI Regional Conference on Migration in El Salvador.

Finally, the Vice-Ministers thanked Canada and the city of Vancouver for their hospitality and the excellent organization of the meetings of the Tenth Regional Conference on Migration.