

## XII MEETING OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON MIGRATION (RCM)

New Orleans, United States, April 26-27, 2007

### DECLARATION

The Twelfth Meeting of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) was held with the participation of the Vice-Ministers of Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States of America, under the theme of “*Effective Cooperation in Combating Trafficking in Persons*” in New Orleans, Louisiana, United States, on April 26-27, 2007.

The Vice-Ministers:

Expressed the commitment of RCM member states to promote regular, orderly and humane migration on the basis of shared responsibility, and the role regional cooperation plays to achieve this objective. In this regard, expressed their commitment to continue strengthening the principles of the Puebla Process, updating the areas for discussion by the RCM, reaffirming the spirit of cooperation and open dialogue among its member states, and playing a lead role, in its capacity as a successful regional consultative process, in the broad international discussion on migration.

Emphasized the commitment of RCM member states to prevent trafficking, prosecute traffickers and protect victims of trafficking, as defined by the United Nations *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, supplementing the *Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*.

Reaffirmed their commitment to the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and its *1967 Protocol* and recognized the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in developing and distributing guidelines related to the treatment of victims of trafficking who may need international protection.

Approved the “*Regional Guidelines for the Special Protection in Cases of the Repatriation of Child Victims of Trafficking*.”

Welcomed the significant advances and efforts accomplished by member countries to combat trafficking both domestically and regionally, such as, steps undertaken to enhance prevention through public awareness campaigns, as well as strengthen legal and administrative frameworks, including their harmonization within Central America.

Reaffirmed that multilateral cooperation in exchanging information and best practices is effective in combating trafficking in persons, in light of the complex and transnational nature of the phenomenon.

Emphasized the vital role that investigation and prosecution of traffickers must play in putting an end to this criminal enterprise that results in severe human rights violations.

Emphasized that victims of trafficking in persons should not be prosecuted for participating in illegal activities, if they are the direct result of their being a victim of such trafficking. Taking into account the dignity of victims, underlined the commitment to work toward such decriminalization, consistent with domestic legislation.

Emphasized the importance of a victim-centered approach that works within the jurisdictions of the various government entities and with civil society organizations, with the purpose of facilitating victim identification, protection, and comprehensive assistance that should include services such as medical, legal, and psycho-social assistance, shelter, and whenever possible and appropriate, safe repatriation and reintegration.

Committed to continue efforts to minimize the risks faced by vulnerable populations, especially women and children, that migrate in an irregular manner and the importance of considering this issue within the RCM, as well as the search for mechanism to provide assistance to migrants who have suffered a disability in their transit to their destination country.

The Vice-Ministers made the following **decisions**:

- Grant the status of RCM observer to the General Secretariat of the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government (SEGIB), and urge that SEGIB consider developing a mechanism to grant a similar status to the RCM.
- Approve,
  1. the holding of a seminar in El Salvador entitled “*Women and Migration in the RCM Region,*” sponsored by El Salvador, Canada, UNHCR, IOM, and the Regional Network of Civil Society Organizations for Migration (RNCOM), with the view to achieving concrete outcomes for appropriate follow-up in the RCM.
  2. the establishment by IOM of a regional training program regarding the protection of victims of trafficking.
  3. the holding of a workshop by the United States on the best practices in investigation and prosecution of traffickers and smugglers; given its importance, it should include involved entities with the objective of building the necessary capacity to confront these crimes.
- Take note with satisfaction of the decision of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to maintain the Mission with Regional Functions for Mexico and Central America in San Jose, Costa Rica. In this context, request from IOM a commitment confirming that the MRF will maintain regional programmatic activities, including the support to the integration process of the CA-4 countries, OCAM, IOM country missions, and the administration of the fund for the voluntary return of migrants in situations of high vulnerability.

Request that the Presidency Pro-Tempore (PPT) obtain in writing, from IOM, its support for the effective functioning of the Technical Secretariat.

- Express satisfaction for the signing, within the context of this meeting, the Annex between Mexico and Nicaragua, contemplated in Article X of the *Memorandum of Understanding between Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua for the dignified, orderly, prompt, and safe repatriation*, which establishes operational procedures between both countries.
- Approve the budget of the Technical Secretariat for its 2008 operations.
- Name Mr. Saul Salvador Ronquillo García as Coordinator for the Technical Secretariat for the period of 2007-2008.
- Welcome the offer of the Government of Guatemala to host the XIV Regional Conference on Migration in 2009. Also, welcome the offer of the Government of Mexico to host the XV Regional Conference on Migration in 2010.

Equally, the Vice-Ministers:

Highlighted the valiant efforts of Mr. Luis E. Monzón during his three-year tenure as Coordinator for the Technical Secretariat of the RCM and wished him well in his future endeavors.

Thank the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and the United States for their presentations on policy initiatives and activities to link migrants with their communities of origin.

Congratulate the efforts of the Government of Costa Rica and Nicaragua, with the support of the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation (AECI) and IOM, for their progress in developing labor migration schemes in orderly and safe conditions, as an example of best practices on migration and development.

Thanked the Regional Network of Civil Organizations for Migration (RNCOM) for its presentation and the document prepared for this meeting. Also, took note of its proposals and recommendations.

Acknowledged the participation of the observer countries, Colombia, Jamaica, and Peru, and the international organizations, International Organization for Migration, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Population Fund, and special invited guests, the Government of Spain and SEGIB.

Reiterate their thanks to the Government of Honduras for their offer to host the XIII Regional Conference on Migration.

Finally, the Vice-Ministers thanked the United States and the city of New Orleans for its hospitality and the excellent organization of the meetings of the Twelfth Regional Conference on Migration.

ANNEXES:

1. Regarding the Vice-Ministerial closed-door session, Vice-Ministers agreed that:

“The Declaration and Decisions document issued at Vice-Ministerial meetings of the Regional Conference on Migration shall include those matters submitted for the consideration of the Vice-Ministers by the Regional Consultation Group on Migration by means of its ‘*Recommendations*’ document and which the Vice-Ministers consider appropriate. The Vice-Ministers may also discuss and/or agree on new issues previously discussed at the closed-door session typically held on the first day of the RCM, and will approve the *Declaration and Decisions* in a second closed-door meeting. The Vice-Ministers may be accompanied at the closed-door meetings by up to two representatives from their respective delegations.”

2. The Vice-Ministers instructed the Regional Consultation Group on Migration to undertake a comprehensive revision of the Plan of Action including the consideration of other themes according to common interests of the RCM member countries.