

JOINT COMMUNIQUE IV REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The IV Regional Conference on Migration took place in San Salvador, El Salvador, on January 28-29, 1999, with the participation of Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States of America. During this meeting, the participating Vice Ministers and Heads of Delegation:

Reiterated that migration is a process with highly positive dimensions which should be addressed by taking a comprehensive, objective and long term approach to its origins, manifestations and effects in the region.

Analyzed in detail the impact on migration caused by Hurricane Mitch in Central America and its significance for the implementation of the objectives of the Plan of Action. They agreed that the Conference is an ideal forum to address the migration-related consequences of this natural disaster from the broad-based point of view of the Puebla Process, with emphasis on the link between migration and development. In this regard, they agreed:

- To submit to the highest authorities of their respective countries the necessity to concentrate international efforts in strategic sectors that generate employment, guaranteeing that reconstruction and development projects which are presented to various international financial institutions in support of the countries affected by hurricane Mitch explicitly incorporate the variable of migration.
- To convene a Workshop of Experts in Mexico City within 60 days in order to identify projects to generate employment and promote social welfare in communities of origin, thus contributing to the success of this objective.
- To request that IOM design a project to evaluate the effects of Hurricane Mitch on migration movements.

They made special mention of the adoption, by Costa Rica and the United States of America, of migration measures benefiting nationals of the countries affected by Hurricane Mitch.

They expressed the commitment of their governments to continue organizing activities which promote full respect for the human rights of migrants, pursuant to the conclusions adopted at a seminar which took place in Washington, DC in April 1998. In this regard, they decided:

To devote the Regional Consultation Group meeting, which will take place at the conclusion of the Seminar on Return and Reintegration of Migrants (Honduras, May, 1999), to considering mechanisms for their orderly return to their countries of origin in safety and dignity, ensuring full respect for their rights.

That, during the Seminar on Consular Protection which will take place in Guatemala in July 1999, each country will provide the name and title of a liaison person(s) for the exchange of information and experiences in the area of consular protection.

They recognized, based on a presentation on labor markets and border cooperation made by Guatemala and Mexico during the meeting of the Regional Consultation Group, that experiences gained from examples of orderly and regulated migration permit the exploration of new possibilities for positive links between migration and development through cooperation and coordination among countries of the Conference. In the case presented, the regulation of transborder migration benefited the migrants as well as the economies of both the country of origin and the country of destination. Additionally, facilitating orderly migration maintains the circular flow of labor movement in specific geographic areas. In this regard:

- Guatemala and Mexico will prepare a joint document for presentation at the next meeting of the Regional Consultation Group to be held in San Salvador, during the third quarter of 1999.
- They pointed out that multilateral cooperation constitutes the best means of achieving the shared objective of combating networks trafficking in extra-regional migrants. In this regard, they decided:
- To request that IOM present to RCM member governments, within 60 days, a proposal for a general program of cooperation for the return of extra-regional migrants, based on the mandate of the Organization. Each government, according to its needs, would identify with IOM the specific terms of implementation.
- They expressed their satisfaction with the advances made by the Regional Conference on Migration with respect to its institutionalization and consolidation, and expressed their satisfaction with the outcomes of the Plan of Action.
- They considered the subject of membership in the Regional Conference on Migration, and decided to accept the application of the Dominican Republic, to become a member of this forum in consideration of its long standing relationship with countries in the region on matters of interest, at the same time closing the admission of new members.

They also decided:

- To accept the request of Argentina to become an observer
- To adopt the criteria defined in the attached document for the acceptance and participation of observers in the Regional Conference on Migration.
- To reserve the right to invite special participants to any of their meetings.
- To continue the practice, initiated at the III Conference on Migration, celebrated in Ottawa in 1998, of dedicating a time during the vice-ministerial meetings for dialog with representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations.
- To establish a Virtual Secretariat, which will be operational before the V Regional Conference on Migration. To achieve this goal, it was agreed that within 45 days an ad hoc Working Group, open to all the members and with the participation of IOM, will meet in Costa Rica for the purpose of identifying the characteristics, functions, methods and costs of operation, assuring that

the Secretariat would have an independent domain. This Group will prepare a Report for the Vice Ministers who will provide their reactions within a period of 15 days.

- To share the experience accumulated in this process with countries of the Caribbean, South America and other regions interested in developing similar mechanisms

They took note with satisfaction of the signing of a Cooperation Agreement 1999, which incorporates regional migration aspects, between the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the International Organization for Migration in San Salvador on January 27, 1999.

They expressed their satisfaction with the participation, as observers, of Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jamaica and Peru, as well as the following international organizations: the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

They expressed their satisfaction with the productive dialogue they held with representatives of various Non-Governmental Organizations working in the area of migration, and welcomed the contributions they may make within the framework of the activities contained in the Plan of Action.

They accepted with thanks the offer of the Delegation of the United States of America to hold the V Regional Conference on Migration in their country during the first quarter of 2000.

Participating Delegations expressed their profound gratitude to the People and Government of the Republic of El Salvador for their warm hospitality and for the excellent organization of the event.