

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

The Fifth Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) took place in Washington, DC, United States of America, March 23rd and 24th, 2000, with the participation of Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and the United States of America.

At this meeting, the Vice-Ministers and Heads of Delegation reiterated their governments' political commitment to preserve and strengthen this forum for dialogue and cooperation, for which purpose they adopted the "Declaration of the Vice-Ministers on the Strengthening of the Regional Conference on Migration." Furthermore, the Vice-Ministers welcomed:

- The work undertaken for the establishment of the Virtual Secretariat, which was formally inaugurated, and approved its operating guidelines. They stressed the importance of being able to rely on a technological tool that will allow a more efficient distribution of information, the coordination of activities and, in general, communication between the member countries. They thanked the efforts of the ad hoc Working Group members and the technical support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for the design and implementation of the project and recognized the special role of the governments in the development of the Virtual Secretariat.

The Delegations believe that the adequate use of the Virtual Secretariat will contribute to the consolidation of this forum and assist in the achievement of the objectives specified in the Puebla Process.

- The results of the "Seminar on Migration, Return, and Reinsertion" that took place in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, on June 10 and 11, 1999. They also expressed the commitment of their governments to continue organizing activities within the framework of the Plan of Action that promote the return and reinsertion of migrants into their home communities in a humanitarian manner.
- The results of the "Seminar on Protection and Consular Assistance" that took place in Guatemala City, Guatemala, on July 29th and 30th, 1999, which promoted the development of consular mechanisms that support the respect for migrant rights. In this respect, they accepted the Seminar's recommendations regarding the encouragement of the sharing of experience and procedures in the area of consular protection, through the network of consular officials, and agreed to the dissemination of information through the Virtual Secretariat.
- The results of the "Seminar on Migrant Women and Children" that took place in San Salvador, El Salvador, on February 24th and 25th, 2000 hosted by the governments of Canada and El Salvador, with technical assistance from IOM. In this respect, they agreed to amplify the results of the seminar through the development of research studies on the topic.
- The results of the presentation made by the Delegations of Guatemala and Mexico before the Regional Consultation Group on Migration regarding the actions taken towards the development of their common border, as well as actions for the documentation of temporary farm workers. In this respect,

interest was expressed in developing similar actions of border cooperation between other members of RCM. El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua expressed particular interest in this regard.

- The results of the "Migratory and Tourist Information Kiosks" program which were presented by the Guatemalan Delegation.

They agreed:

- That the activities to be developed throughout the year 2000, within the context of the Plan of Action, will be directed at the "consolidation of a sustainable vision on the future of the RCM," based on the principles of dignity, responsibility, and security, when addressing the migratory phenomenon.
- That the themes and activities of the Plan of Action will be updated in accordance with the proposals presented during the Fifth RCM. Likewise, they agreed to charge the Secretariat pro tempore with fine-tuning the Plan in order that it include both a historical record and a listing of activities to be developed. The adjusted Plan should be ready before the next meeting of the Regional Consultation Group on Migration.
- To endorse the development of a Migration Information System in Central America and the procuring of pertinent funds.
- To continue consideration of the Multilateral Cooperation Program for the Assisted Return of Extra-Regional Migrants stranded in RCM member countries at the earliest opportunity.
- To accept the request of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to join the RCM as an international organization observer due to the close relationship between human rights and migration issues.

They reiterated:

- Their support for the meaningful dialogue established from the beginning of the Puebla Process with representatives of civil society organizations, and the importance of continued participation by these organizations in information sharing activities, contributing in this manner to the achievement of the objectives of the Plan of Action.

At the same time, the intention of these organizations to shape a set of minimum standards regarding migrant detention and repatriation in the region and their interest in organizing a Seminar on the subject were noted.

- Their recognition of the success of the national program Bienvenido a Casa in El Salvador, which was implemented with the support of IOM and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the financial cooperation of the United States of America. In the implementation of this program, the contribution of civil society organizations has been fundamental in promoting the successful reinsertion of returned migrants. In this context, they referred to activities of the Programa Paisano established in Mexico, which is celebrating its eleventh

anniversary this year, as well as the recently inaugurated program in Honduras, the Centro de Atención al Migrante Hondureño Retornado.

The Vice-Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the participation, as observers, of Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Jamaica and Peru, as well as the following international organizations: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations Population Council (UNPC).

Finally, the Vice-Ministers thanked and approved the offer of the Delegation of the government of Costa Rica to host the Sixth Regional Conference on Migration in that country during the first trimester of 2001.

The participating delegations expressed their deepest gratitude to the people and government of the United States of America for its warm hospitality, and the excellent organization of the event.