

Conclusions and Recommendations

Caribbean Subregional Consultation of the Cartagena+40 Process

Protection and Comprehensive Solutions for Persons in Situations of Human Mobility and Statelessness

Bogota, Colombia, 18 June, 2024

I. INTRODUCTION

The Caribbean Subregional Consultation of the Cartagena+40 Process took place in Bogota, Colombia on June 18th. Prior to the meeting, the Governments of Chile and Colombia, with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), circulated a [concept note](#) that informed and guided the consultations of country representatives and other participants.

Approximately forty delegates participated in this meeting, including government representatives of eight countries and territories of the Caribbean –The Bahamas, Belize, the British Virgin Islands, Cuba, Curacao, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia–, Chile and Colombia. Representatives from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and its Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS), the Inter American Development Bank (IADB), the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), the Platform for Disaster Displacement (PDD), and UNHCR were also present.

It enabled participants to gain insights into the achievements, challenges and prospective needs in the Caribbean in relation to displacement.

In this regard, participants highlighted that the Caribbean made significant progress in creating protection responses and tools, legal stay arrangements, and other shared legal mechanisms that have facilitated dialogue and cooperation. While not all countries are parties to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, the general respect of the principle of *non-refoulement* was observed. Some participants acknowledged the challenges of protection and response at sea while recognizing migration as both a catalyst and an opportunity and recalled the importance of including displacement in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (MCDSCF).

Furthermore, Caribbean countries and territories discussed potential common responses to protection needs, on how to reduce the burden on countries hosting large number of displaced persons compared to their national population, as well as on how to establish mechanisms of responsibility sharing within and outside the region, and exploring ways in which displaced persons can create shared opportunities, benefit host communities, and promote peaceful coexistence and social cohesion, avoiding the emergence of xenophobia and discrimination.

The conclusions and recommendations that resulted from this Consultation will be considered in the drafting of the Declaration and Plan of Action of Chile 2024-2034.

II. OPENING REMARKS

The Consultation was inaugurated by Ms. Elizabeth Taylor Jay, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Ambassador Tomás Pascual, Director of Human Rights Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile and Mr. Juan Carlos Murillo, Head of External Engagement for the Americas of UNHCR.

In their opening remarks, the speakers underscored the importance of Cartagena, as it commemorates its 40th anniversary, as a strong example and forum for discussion, particularly in light of current challenges such as climate change. They also highlighted the significance of the Global Refugee Forum and stressed the importance of the Caribbean countries' involvement, particularly given their geographical location and experience in dealing with the adverse effects of disasters and climate change. Additionally, they recognized the need to advocate for the interconnectedness between climate change, displacement, and sustainable development within the Chile Plan of Action.

Speakers further underlined the multiple and overlapping routes of mixed movements in the Americas and the Caribbean, and the need to adopt a human rights-based approach to refugee protection and access to basic services such as education, health, and employment with particular attention to the risks faced by women and children.

There was a general recognition that the Cartagena+40 Process provides an opportunity for Caribbean States to highlight their own regional cooperation, comprehensive protection strategies, and good practices in terms of the active participation of multiple stakeholders in addressing the challenges of human mobility and statelessness. By strengthening asylum systems, ensuring immediate attention in border areas, and promoting legal, and socioeconomic inclusion, refugees, other forcibly displaced and stateless persons can benefit from better support and protection, while fostering stability and development in host communities.

III. SEGMENT I STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN THE CARIBBEAN

During the first segment, it was stressed that several Caribbean countries and territories have made substantial progress in various goals set within the 2014 Brazil Plan of Action, including strengthening their protection and solutions agenda for asylum seekers, refugees, and stateless persons through sustainable progress and overcoming challenges. Regional solidarity and the support of UNHCR and the international community were highlighted as key elements of this progress.

Many country representatives expressed their solidarity with Haiti, and some called for further support from UNHCR and IOM.

Participants identified several key challenges, which include limited resources and capacities and the need to strengthen collaboration with Latin American neighbors to ensure alignment of migration management policies.

Some States mentioned that the Caribbean islands have had to adapt to adverse weather conditions to minimize displacement. Nevertheless, the risk of displacement remains high, with many people being forced to leave their country. It was highlighted that CARICOM and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) have supported temporary relocation of families.

There was a common agreement on the need to ensure dignified treatment to displaced persons, including those rescued at sea, noting however the porousness of sea borders and the challenges this presents for Caribbean countries and territories.

Overall, participants agreed on the need to continue working in partnership with UNHCR and requested continuous support to strengthen their national systems and regulations on refugees and forcibly displaced people. Some States invited UNHCR to continue capacity-building initiatives with governments and suggested including civil society and the private sector as well. Finally, States underlined the importance of promoting and supporting the participation of local communities in the provision of protection.

On the basis of the discussion and the significant milestones achieved by the sub-region in the past decade the following recommendations were made:

- Expanding and strengthening asylum and international protection systems (five countries have already established national asylum systems).

- Developing regularization mechanisms.
- Drafting progressive local integration policies.
- Cooperating with significant resettlement efforts led by UNHCR.
- Continue relevant efforts to adopt concrete actions to combat statelessness, such as ratifying the Statelessness Conventions, eliminating gender discrimination from nationality laws, ensuring the right of women, regardless of their marital status, to transmit nationality to their children, and making nationality documentation available to all eligible individuals.
- Participants called for enhanced collaboration between the existing regional mechanisms in the Caribbean.

IV. SEGMENT II SUPPORTING HOST COMMUNITIES TO PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION AND STRENGTHEN RESPONSIBILITY-SHARING MECHANISMS

During the second segment, it was noted that Caribbean countries have demonstrated collaboration to address the needs of their neighbors, highlighting the importance of promoting and achieving inclusion.

The Cartagena process emphasizes the critical role of economic inclusion in empowering refugees and stateless persons. Economic opportunities are essential for survival, self-reliance, and resilience. Creating pathways for refugees and stateless individuals means contributing meaningfully to host communities.

Whether as an inherent right during regularization or upon individual request, work permits empower refugees to actively contribute to their host communities. Furthermore, some states recognize refugees' right to work alongside permanent residence permits, promoting stability and social cohesion.

Education was considered another cornerstone of integration. Some countries have free primary education for all children, although secondary education challenges persist. There was consensus that education and awareness programs aimed at host communities are essential to inform and sensitize people of the reasons for forced displacement. It was suggested that social and economic integration can also be promoted through art and culture and highlighted the importance of establishing mechanisms by which host communities can participate and given a voice.

Several participants acknowledged that diversity contributes to stronger communities. It was widely recognized that the Cartagena+40 process encourages burden-sharing among States, international organizations, civil society, academia, the private sector and communities in a whole-

of-society approach. In this context, there was consensus regarding the vital role played by resettlement and other third-country solutions in the Caribbean. In recent years, increased resettlement efforts have been made to countries like Australia, Canada, and the United States.

In its presentation, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) cited a survey highlighting that the Caribbean faces challenges such as climate change-related issues, which in 2017 led to the displacement of 3 million people in a single month. Notwithstanding such climate induced challenges, it was suggested that high human mobility rates in the Caribbean be they climate induced or other, can also be considered an opportunity. The working-age population, particularly those highly educated, can address labor shortages in some countries. Furthermore, this economically active group could benefit the hosting countries when included in the formal labor market and contribute through fiscal revenues.

The representative of CARICOM presented the foundation and framework for a Regional Approach to Migration Policy (RAMP) to advance the Region's migration priorities and address the main challenges and opportunities, including through protection. He also suggested a reactivating a form of consultation to ensure inclusion of the refugee protection dimension in the policy development, building on the Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC) a mechanism created in the context of the Brazil Plan of Action and further developed with the support of UNHCR and IOM to foster dialogue and common actions. Equally, CARICOM called on the IADB and UNHCR to promote more programs and policies in the Caribbean.

The following best practices, initiatives and recommendations to enhance social integration and social cohesion while supporting host communities were identified by participants:

- Stressed the importance of resolving absence of documentation as it represents a significant barrier for refugees to access public services, and the need to allow other forms of documentation to ensure their access to health and other public services.
- Highlighted the importance of international organizations' support, particularly of UNHCR, in strengthening their protection systems through capacity building, training and education for public servants, including border officials, as well as the need to invest in capacity-building initiatives in host communities.
- Promote education and awareness programs within host communities.
- Strengthen community engagement programs that allow the involvement of host communities in decision-making.
- Promoting initiatives oriented to fostering dialogue for social integration and inclusion opportunities (e.g. cultural events and language courses).

- Consider that healthcare is a fundamental right, transcending borders and status, and therefore: a) eliminate fees in public hospitals to expand access to health care to all, including displaced persons and refugees recognized under UNHCR mandate, emphasizing their well-being, b) extend free access to public services, including health and psychosocial support, despite limited resources, c) provide access to emergency medical care and primary healthcare to asylum-seekers, and, widely, d) ensure universal access to primary public healthcare to non-nationals regardless of their migratory status.
- Pursue economic empowerment initiatives as well as developing employment and self-employment opportunities, enacting legislation and policies allowing work authorization, implementing amnesty regulations and programs which will also allow formal access to the labor market and obtaining the support of the private sector and NGOs as essential partners in fostering protection and inclusion.
- Called for solutions involving third countries as an effective mechanism to alleviate the burden on countries that receive a disproportionate number of displaced persons, through resettlement or family reunification as a complementary pathway for solutions.
- Adopt monitoring and evaluation of programs to ensure the effectiveness of these mechanisms.
- Advocate for International's community targeted assistance to host communities.

Finally, a cross-cutting call was made for peace, cooperation, solidarity, and shared responsibility, inviting all the Caribbean to unite in the humanitarian spirit that inspires the Cartagena Process.