**First High-Level Meeting of the Troika, Regional Conference on Migration (RCM)**

February 19, 2016

San Salvador, El Salvador

Notes by the Technical Secretariat

List of participants (in alphabetical order):

**El Salvador**

* Mrs Liduvina Magarín, Vice-Minister for Salvadorans Abroad



* Mrs Tania Camila Rosa, Director General of Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
* Mrs Ana Irma Rodas, Director of Assistance and Protection, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Honduras**

* Mrs María Andrea Matamoros Castillo, Undersecretary of State for Consular and Migration Affairs
* Mrs Flabia Reveca Zamora Flores, Director of Consular Affairs
* Mrs Ena Gabriela Vega Ferrera, Head of the Office for Assistance to Returned Migrants

**Mexico**

* Mrs Socorro Flores Liera, Undersecretary for Latin America and the Caribbean, Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico
* Mr Francisco Javier Olavarría Patiño, Ambassador of Mexico in El Salvador
* Mr Juan Gabriel Morales Morales, Deputy Director General for Hemispheric and Security Affairs, Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico
* Mr Gustavo Gutiérrez Contreras, Attaché for Migration Affairs for Central America

**Technical Secretariat of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM)**

* Mrs Nitza E. Seguí Albino, Coordinator of the Technical Secretariat of the RCM
* Mr Renán Francisco Rodas Posada, IT Specialist of the RCM

**Morning Session:**

The meeting was convened with the dual purpose of involving the Troika in the process of accompanying the efforts of the Presidency Pro-Témpore and strengthening the institutional operations of the RCM by empowering the Technical Secretariat (TS) as a facilitator of the work of the RCM through appropriate follow-up actions. In addition, we are seeking to reflect the theme of the Presidency Pro-Témpore (PPT) in the work areas of the RCM and to promote clearly defined regional objectives for the RCM.



Vice-Minister Matamoros opened the working session on behalf of the PPT.

The Coordinator of the TS began by presenting the agenda[[1]](#footnote-1) for the day and describing the internal work process that the TS has implemented from November 2015 to date; that is, reviewing historical documents about the structure and operations of the TS and preparing a compilation of the current regulations[[2]](#footnote-2). In addition, she shared information about the experience of systematizing the planning process to identify general topics and guidelines for the Work Plan[[3]](#footnote-3) based on a review of the agreements of the RCM in 2013-2015. In addition, the systematization process included the following: administrative matters and the need for additional human resources; short-term actions to support the work of the TS through internships without significant cost; and developing social communication strategies (seeking to develop materials that are more user-friendly and easy to understand) and developing tools to follow up on and evaluate the agreements of the RCM. Furthermore, the TS provided information about the first coordination meeting with observer organizations and civil society, through the Regional Network for Civil Organizations on Migration (RNCOM), to converse and organize the cooperation efforts and support for the regional agreements of the RCM in an effective and concerted manner.

Vice-Minister Matamoros mentioned that, considering that each PPT only serves for a one-year term, prominence should be given to the role of the TS in order to ensure follow-up on the various issues. In addition, Mrs Matamoros expressed that the commitments of Mexico (as the former PPT) concerning follow-up actions should be kept in mind. Furthermore, she pointed out that the Troika should take on a greater role in accompanying the PPT between vice-ministerial meetings, with the aim of achieving coherence in the efforts of the RCM.

El Salvador noted the importance of defining the work plan, in line with the theme established by the PPT, in order to strengthen dialogue within the RCM as a consultation forum. In addition, El Salvador mentioned that different points of view of RCM Member Countries have been identified regarding various topics, and the need to unify criteria was highlighted. Furthermore, El Salvador expressed the need to identify three specific and realistic goals that can be achieved within the RCM, emphasizing that the problems require joint solutions. The recent case of Cubans and the current migration flows in the region was mentioned as an example of situations which require joint action. Moreover, the representative of El Salvador mentioned that capacity-building is required on labour migration and other topics, such as regularization, to be able to combat the danger of populations at risk, including migrants. Finally, El Salvador mentioned that the theme established by Honduras seeks to point out the need to view the current problems from a perspective which includes the responsibilities held by the RCM Member Countries.



Mexico highlighted the importance of the systematization process to promote the lines of action approved in 2015; and ultimately, to identify the issues to follow up on. In addition, Mexico expressed concern about the absence of the RCM in regional matters; for example, the recent crisis involving Cuban nationals, among others. And finally, Mexico mentioned that strengthening the RCM should be a matter of priority for all RCM Member Countries.

Honduras proposed that the document on regulations compiled by the Technical Secretariat (TS) be reviewed and asked the Coordinator of the TS about the process to compile the input on this document and the Work Plan for 2016. In addition, Honduras suggested that the general objectives be discussed and that they become permanent issues which are not changed by each PPT in office. Furthermore, Honduras requested that the objectives of the PPT be separated from the general plan, since they correspond to a specific annual schedule. Moreover, it was highlighted that it is important that the document on regulations be strong and clear, and that the RCM Member Countries should be consulted at a later stage by means of a specific mechanism.

Subsequently, the Coordinator of the TS explained the structure of the Regulatory and Operational Document, which includes a compilation of current regulations. She mentioned that the title of the document could be changed, if necessary. In addition, she presented the four objectives that emerged from the Work Plan of the RCM for reflection and dialogue among the participants.

The TS was congratulated on the work that has been done, and the need was expressed to strengthen the TS and the RCM.

Vice-Minister Flores indicated that the technical team of the TS should not be large and that technical assistance from cooperation agencies should be used.

The Coordinator of the TS clarified that the need has been identified to add one staff member to the team at this point in time, and that support should be coordinated and concerted with the cooperation agencies that observe the work of the RCM – the active as well as the inactive ones. In regard to the latter, the TS is currently developing a strategy to get them more involved, in order to enable them to provide assistance in those areas where the RCM requires the most support and strengthening. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was mentioned as an example for the area of research and UN Women to support gender mainstreaming processes.

Mexico expressed that the TS should develop the Work Plan and that the PPT should take it as a guide. In addition, Mexico suggested that the Troika take on the role of supporting follow-up on the Work Plan and that the RCM Member Countries should maintain their decision-making role. Mexico said that having a follow-up mechanism is essential for the RCM and suggested that the Troika be the means to achieve this. Finally, Mexico stated that the Regulations Document only requires cosmetic changes, since the document submitted by the TS is a compilation of previously established agreements. In addition, it was pointed out that the document includes all elements and that therefore, it will not be necessary to negotiate changes with the RCM Member Countries. In regard to the Work Plan, Mexico said that it is important to determine how future plans will be developed.

Honduras stated the importance of sharing the Work Plan with all Member Countries as soon as possible, to ensure that the role and scope of the role of each actor (that is, the Troika, the TS, etc.) is clearly understood by all.

Mexico suggested a two-week term for the members of the Troika to send their input on the Regulation Document (by Friday, March 4), underscoring that it should reflect, verbatim, prior agreements reached within the RCM to ensure that it is not open to other interpretations.

El Salvador suggested to separate the issue of institutional strengthening of the RCM/TS from the theme established by the PPT, identifying the objectives that the PPT wishes to achieve. In addition, El Salvador reminded the other participants that the Work Plan should include the topics of the Liaison Officer Networks and the potential network on migrant boys, girls and adolescents.

At the request of Honduras, Mexico briefly described the internal consultation process that was implemented to establish its theme as PPT and the activities that were carried out.

To conclude, the general objectives were discussed and agreed on. The TS will continue to develop specific actions and follow-up efforts and design tools to evaluate the process.

It was noted that the Work Plan takes into account the three central themes of the RCM in a cross-cutting manner.

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| GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE WORK PLAN OF THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON MIGRATION (RCM) |
| General Objective 1:  To strengthen the effectiveness of the RCM as a space for regional dialogue, consultation and cooperation in migration matters through following up on the agreements reached by the RCM Member Countries.  General Objective 1.a:  To promote participatory dialogue and cooperation with civil society.  General Objective 1.b:  To strengthen the links with countries, mechanisms and organizations involved in the matter. |
| General Objective 2:  To strengthen regional protection mechanisms for migrant boys, girls and adolescents, ensuring that the best interest of the child prevails. |
| General Objective 3:  To strengthen protection mechanisms for migrants, with special consideration of persons in vulnerable situations.  General Objective 3.a:  To strengthen regional cooperation to promote the integration and productive reintegration of migrants. |
| General Objective 4:  To strengthen regional mechanisms to combat migrant smuggling and trafficking. |

**Afternoon Session:**

The Technical Secretariat (TS) will prepare an introductory paragraph to present these objectives to the RCM Member Countries. The text will be shared with the Troika, which will provide input within the previously mentioned two-week term.

Honduras presented the proposed activities for its term as PPT. The representative from Honduras began by confirming the commitment to follow up on the agreements reached during the term of Mexico as PPT. In regard to the topic of the network for children, Honduras informed the other participants that UNICEF has been consulted and that the opinion of that organization is being awaited. Furthermore, Honduras stated that, regardless of the opinion of UNICEF, the actions of the Liaison Officer Network for Consular Protection will be evaluated in order to establish how the topic of children fits into or is related to this Network.

Another action being considered by Honduras is implementing the lines of action established during the XX RCM.



In addition, Honduras will address the issue of extra-regional migrants, particularly Cuban nationals. The representative from Honduras mentioned that the task of strengthening the RCM, as well as strengthening collaboration with civil society, will be an ongoing effort. Furthermore, Honduras said that the TS as well as the PPT have already established contact with civil society and international organizations, urging them to get more involved in the work of the PPT and that they, in turn, have expressed their willingness and intention to contribute more to the RCM.

In regard to the theme of the PPT, “Shared and Differentiated Responsibility”, Honduras stated that this is an important theme which is developed in the daily activities and that it should be viewed from a humanitarian perspective. In addition, Honduras argued that this is a shared responsibility because the individual efforts that can be implemented are small, compared with what could be achieved as a region. The example of the Cuban nationals was mentioned, and how difficult it is for a given country to be willing to cooperate if another country does not cooperate. In regard to differentiation, organized crime, violence and other aspects have been identified as causes of migration. The example of drugs was mentioned, pointing out that South America is a region of production, Central America is a region of transfer and North America is a region of destination and consumption. Therefore, each region has different roles. Central America is responsible for combating drug trafficking networks, United States is responsible for reducing and preventing the consumption of and demand for drugs, and South America is responsible for preventing production.

Honduras explained that each country plays a different role in terms of places of origin, transit and destination, and that these roles change over time. Each country should take on responsibilities in line with these changes. Furthermore, Honduras had never been a country of destination before, until now; and a rapid increase has been observed in the number of migrants from various countries who transit through this country. Honduras now has the responsibility of reintegrating its returned nationals and in addition, holds responsibilities as a country of transit and destination. This leads to the need for a workshop on the theme of the PPT with the objective of establishing the roles of countries of destination, transit countries and sending countries. Moreover, Honduras highlighted that it is important for each country to take on its responsibility and role to address the issue of migration.

This is a comprehensive approach that cannot be fragmented. Each area has to be strengthened in order to achieve the desired impact, and no aspect should be neglected. In addition, Honduras indicated that safe and orderly reintegration is not possible without a dignified return and that return, reception or reintegration cannot be addressed separately. In closing the intervention about the term of Honduras as PPT, the representative of Honduras stated that the dynamics of migration are constantly changing and that Honduras intends to determine how the migration flows and different realities can be managed from a regional perspective, identifying roles, duties and responsibilities as well as better lines of communication between Member Countries.

In regard to the finances of the RCM, the Government of Honduras intends to settle accounts in a definitive manner and highlighted this commitment. The need has been identified to develop payment schedules, seek payment incentives and develop strategies to improve the finances and thus, strengthen the Technical Secretariat (TS).

Furthermore, Honduras mentioned that they will submit a plan of action/schedule of proposed activities and a summary of the theme in the next two weeks. The activities include civil society, topics that have already been addressed through the TS, as well as observer organizations and countries, since Honduras believes that they can facilitate discussions because they also share in the responsibilities, and that the international organizations could support the TS in following up on the commitments emanating from the meetings.

Mexico took the floor and thanked Honduras for the explanations. Mexico said that it is in fact essential to address comprehensive shared responsibility, and that the humanitarian aspect has yet to be clearly defined; however, this topic can be discussed. In addition, Mexico highlighted that care needs to be taken in using the term “differentiated”, since this term has been the subject of many debates and has generated differences of opinion in international forums. To date, the term “differentiated responsibility” has basically been used in regard to climate change issues, since there are [greenhouse gas] emitting countries and other countries that are not, and the latter suffer the consequences. Furthermore, Mexico said that they are concerned that the language used to refer to the responsibilities of countries of origin and destination could lead to misinterpretations, allocating a degree of responsibility to each country, and this would give the wrong message. Furthermore, Mexico supports dialogue on migration flows outside the region of the RCM and proposes that the Ad Hoc Group on Extraregional Migration be convened to share information about these migration flows. In addition, Mexico requested that the name of this group be changed to avoid referring to one specific group – Cuban nationals, in this case.

El Salvador agreed with Mexico in regard to the use of the term “differentiated responsibility”, which could lead to misinterpretations, especially in terms of not indicating the degree of responsibility – or lack thereof – of a given country.

Honduras committed to seeking the appropriate wording to refer to differentiated responsibility, affirming that the themes and terms to be used will be stated very clearly.

The Coordinator of the TS presented the schedule of activities (events) for 2016[[4]](#footnote-4):

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| January | Consular workshop on protection for boys, girls and adolescents |
| March | Workshop on validation of regional handbooks and instruments, Ad Hoc Group for Migrant Boys, Girls and Adolescents |
| April | Workshop on sharing data about extraregional migration flows, Mexico (added) |
| May | The workshop on civil society and a toolbox for local development (previously discussed with the Secretariat of the Interior of Mexico and CAMMINA) will be held in Honduras |
| June | Meeting of the Regional Consultation Group on Migration (RCGM) and a workshop on the theme of the PPT |
| September | Workshop on migration and health, Canada and Costa Rica, to be held in Costa Rica (previously announced for May) |
| November | Meeting of the Regional Consultation Group on Migration (RCGM) and Vice-Ministerial Meeting, Honduras |

Honduras mentioned its intention of holding a mid-term vice-ministerial meeting, possibly in August. El Salvador supported this initiative since it would enable learning about the advances of each country. The possibility was mentioned of holding an online meeting, mainly for financial reasons. Mexico expressed no objection to the proposal.

El Salvador informed the other participants that the issue of female migration is being discussed as a potential theme for the term of El Salvador as PPT in 2017, with a special interest in analysing the realities facing women and the difficulties experienced by girls and women, as well as other particularities. El Salvador suggested that the Troika could provide valuable input on the selected theme. The intention is to develop regional public policies under this theme.

Mexico proposed that a workshop be held to exchange information about migration flows outside the region of the RCM and the routes of these flows. The workshop could be held in April and would include contributions by different experts. The Coordinator of the TS suggested that this occasion could be used to follow up on the issue and that the South American Conference on Migration (CSM) could be invited and in addition, a technical meeting of both Troikas could be held.

Mexico pointed out that IOM will soon convene a workshop on migration and cities, involving local governments in the issue of migration. In addition, Mexico mentioned that the CSM is including academia in many efforts, and that this could be a good example to follow.

Honduras will invite the CSM to the vice-ministerial meeting to be held in November in order to position the RCM more as a forum that can contribute to other spaces and, at the same time, learn from them. Mexico mentioned the global meeting of Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs) as an example. These meetings will be celebrated annually, beginning this year.

Honduras mentioned that they have been including academia in some initiatives, and the first and only observatory for consular and migration matters is now in place within the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs. The observatory has drawn the attention of various cooperation agencies and the possibility is being envisioned of creating a regional observatory in the future.

Mexico proposed to work with the Coordinator of the TS to develop a manual on the status of migration issues, which would serve as input for the PPT and support follow-up actions.

The Coordinator of the TS mentioned that she has approached academia (CIDE, FLACSO, etc.) on various occasions and that ways of incorporating these organizations are currently being considered to enable them to cooperate and support the efforts of the RCM. In addition, she said that she has approached IOM about the possibility of using the RCM as a space to test some type of observatory.

Mexico congratulated El Salvador on the theme that they are considering, since this will enable mainstreaming a gender perspective within the RCM. This is one of the new pending tasks. Honduras supported the initiative of El Salvador and mentioned the actions that have been taken by this country in this regard.

Honduras proposed to consider reflecting on the positive side of migration and not only the daily human drama, recognizing those Honduran nationals that have excelled in other countries around the world. In addition, Honduras mentioned the importance of the RCM in promoting regional campaigns to discourage irregular migration and warn about the risks of migration. To this end, Honduras suggests that ideas should be collected during the workshop to be held in June (together with the meeting of the Regional Consultation Group on Migration (RCGM)) and during the mid-term vice-ministerial meeting, with the aim of developing this campaign as a specific product of the RCM.

El Salvador expressed that it would be relevant, for the mid-term vice-ministerial meeting, to analyse the role of the observers that are currently not active in order to encourage them to get more involved and see what they can contribute as observers. The passive role that they are currently playing is not necessarily the role that inspired them to get involved in the RCM. El Salvador suggested that a meeting be convened with them to share information about the current reality in the region. Furthermore, El Salvador requested that the TS develop a proposal to invite them to the mid-term vice-ministerial meeting and explain to them that they are expected to get more actively involved.



The Coordinator of the TS mentioned that initial contact has been established with more actively involved observer organizations and that plans are under way to convene a subsequent meeting with the less active observers, with the objective of involving them more fully and defining the areas of cooperation more clearly. In addition, contact has been re-established with civil society organizations to identify common areas of work and discuss how they can contribute to the RCM. Mexico suggested that actions oriented toward these approaches be included in the specific objectives of the Work Plan of the RCM to avoid duplication of efforts by the various organizations and ensure a better use of the resources.

Moreover, the Coordinator of the TS added that the TS had shared a draft agreement with some RCM Member Countries in November, concerning payment of contributions and standardizing the way in which payments are made, with the aim of keeping the finances of the TS in proper health. In addition, she mentioned that the TS conducted a comparative analysis of the roles of the TS and the existing human resources. Due to the increase in the number of tasks to be performed, we believe that it is necessary to hire an additional staff member to support the area of logistics in order to enable the current assistant to take on the role of supporting follow-up and evaluation actions.

El Salvador proposed that a management plan be developed to secure resources from international cooperation agencies to support the RCM Member Countries, through the TS. In addition, the possibility was mentioned of reviewing the current financial contributions made by RCM Member Countries; perhaps some countries can provide additional financial resources. The Coordinator of the TS shared information about the new process being implemented by the TS to coordinate cooperation efforts with international observer organizations in the RCM, as well as the mechanisms that have been designed to give continuity to this process.

Mexico could promote future dialogue to strengthen the finances of the TS and reinforce the concept that, while signed payment agreements do not exist, each country holds responsibility as a RCM Member Country.

Honduras noted that the meeting was very valuable and productive and that it trusts that a mid-term meeting can be held in August.

1. See the attached agenda. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See: Regulatory and Operational Document, A Compilation of Current Operational Regulations of the RCM (1996-2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See the Document on Systematization of the Planning Process for the Development of a Proposed Work Plan. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Please see the PowerPoint presentations. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)