**Proposal to Adjust Work Flow and Meeting Structures of the RCM**

Presented by the Government of the United States

May 29, 2012

**Background:**

For 15 years the RCM has been a highly effective forum in which its members have had an opportunity to candidly debate and discuss complex migration issues in a collegial, non-politicized environment. The RCM can be justly proud of its accomplishments. As with any organization, however, it is helpful to periodically review processes, mechanisms, and procedures in order to enhance efficiency and bring about the best possible outcomes.

Several recent meetings of the RCM focused on the wish of RCM members to have more narrowly focused discussions and better follow-up on issues. Examples include the “Santa Fe” document generated at a May 2011 meeting hosted by Mexico that sharpened the RCM’s mechanisms for decision-making. This was followed by Canada's “Proposal for structuring discussion and activity reporting in the RCM,” adopted at the 16th RCM in June 2011, which grouped subjects for discussion into thematic areas in order to identify gaps in the work plan, better organize agendas, and facilitate discussion.

To build on these excellent efforts, the United States presented a concept note at the November 2011 RCGM to slightly adjust the work flow and meeting structures of RCM and RCGM meetings, in order to establish clear guidelines that would make it easier for the Chair, Technical Secretariat (TS) to perform their roles and for RCM members to prepare for meetings. RCM members responded positively, and this proposal further develops the concept note, with a focus on agenda preparation and drafting committee procedures.

**Proposal:**

1. **Agenda Preparation**

*Summary*: A clear timetable for the Technical Secretariat’s (TS) advance dissemination of agendas, proposals, reports, and background papers, prior to each meeting of the RCGM and RCM, would give RCM members sufficient time to prioritize issues and prepare their Vice Ministers and other participants for discussions. A tentative agenda for the closed-door meeting of Vice Ministers should also be distributed in advance. Further, many important issues tend to appear on the RCGM agenda but not on that of the RCM itself. It is the Vice Ministers who can provide the direction and oversight that is necessary to ensure RCM efforts are appropriately focused and implemented. Given the increasing complexity of issues under discussion, we believe our work would be strengthened, and duplication of work would be avoided, if the most highly substantive agenda items were scheduled for a time when both RCGM attendees and Vice-Ministers are in attendance. The Closed-Door Meeting of Vice Ministers could be shortened to allow for this.

* 1. **Timing for circulation of drafts**: Draft agendas should be circulated at least one month in advance of the meetings to allow delegations ample time to prepare.
  2. **Annotations**: The Technical Secretariat (TS) will very briefly annotate agendas with the following information:
     1. **Background** – Indicate how and when the issue arose in the RCM, what issues are under consideration, and whether proposals have been made.
     2. **Background Documents** – List background papers that have been prepared (and post them on RCM web site or circulate them via email).

* 1. **Circulation of agendas**: Final agendas and background documents should be circulated at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. The TS can elect to post background documents on the web site (followed by an email to the RCM collective mailing list that they have done so), or by sending the documents via email to RCM members as they become available.
  2. **Selection of Items for RCGM and Vice-Ministerial Agenda:**  The most important of the substantive items placed on the RCGM agenda under current practice should be moved to the first day of the Vice-Ministerial meeting, the Chair in Office to select which items merit Vice Ministers' attention. If necessary, the Closed Door Meeting could be shortened accordingly, or the Vice Ministerial meeting could be extended for a second full day, rather than a half day.

1. **Drafting Committee**

*Summary:* Starting the drafting process for RCGM Conclusions and Recommendations as agenda items are taken up, rather than all at once after the close of RCGM proceedings, would make it easier for the Chair and TS to accurately keep track of them. This would also help avoid late night drafting sessions, which sometimes delay the start of the following day’s meeting, and result in fatigue on the part of drafting team members that can detract from the quality of discussions. Similarly, the Drafting Committee should not prepare points on issues the Vice-Ministers have not yet addressed in the Closed Door Meeting.

* 1. **Chair’s Designation of Rapporteur:** At the beginning of an RCGM or RCM meeting, the Chair in Office will designate, by name, a Rapporteur from its delegation. The Rapporteur will convene Drafting Committees for both the RCGM and the RCM. Each RCM member will designate a participant to serve on the Drafting Committees and will prepare its desired input, based on discussions, for the Drafting Committees in advance.
  2. **Note-taking and Work Flow in Meetings and Drafting Committees**: The TS will have the primary responsibility for taking detailed notes on proceedings during RCGM and RCM meetings. The Rapporteur, with the assistance of the TS, will lead each Drafting Committee in generating conclusions, recommendations, declarations, or decisions that accurately reflect discussions and/or decisions. The Chair’s Rapporteur will be present at all times to lead the Drafting Committees. The RCGM Drafting Committee will convene immediately after the close of each day of the RCGM for two hours.
  3. **Translation**: Translation of documents being drafted in Spanish will take place simultaneously, rather than after the Spanish version has been finalized, in order that all participants can adequately address questions that may arise.
  4. **Communication between Drafting Committee and Vice-Ministerial Closed Door Meetings**: The Chair will communicate decisions reached in the Vice-Ministerial Closed Door Meeting to the Drafting Committee either via a courier who takes declarations and decisions to the Drafting Committee as soon as they are reached, or via email to the Rapporteur, at the Chair's discretion. The Drafting Committee should not prepare points on issues the Vice-Ministers have not yet addressed in the Closed Door Meeting.