

**Meeting of the Working Group on  
Border Management  
Current Realities at the Borders: How to Manage  
Irregular Migration Flows and Broaden  
Protection Schemes**

Concept Note

**Monday, September 20, 2021**



## Concept Note

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### Meeting of the Working Group on Border Management

#### Current Realities at Borders: How to Manage Irregular Migration Flows and Broaden Protection Schemes Virtual Session (Zoom Platform)

#### BACKGROUND

The dialogue on current realities at the borders, related to the management of irregular migration flows and the expansion of protection schemes for migrants who need them, was one of the activities that the Report of the Working Group on Management Border of December 1, 2020, identified as priorities for compliance with the Strategic Plan of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) 2019-2025.<sup>1</sup>

Within the framework of the different information and experience exchange schemes promoted by the RCM, it has been concluded that the exponential increase in intra-regional and extra-regional irregular migration bound for the United States of America represents challenges that demand the equitable commitment between countries of origin, transit, destination and return, in order to address them from the principle of shared responsibility. Particularly in a context plagued by emerging crises that constantly exceed the institutional capacities and resources of States to effectively manage migration.

The multiple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of borders in many countries, as well as the disasters caused by natural phenomena and political conflicts that have recently affected the continent, added new variables to the structural causes of migration and forced displacement, and increased the levels of complexity to implement comprehensive response frameworks in matters of assisted returns, migration management and control, as well as processing of applications for international protection.

At the first technical meeting of the year within the framework of the Working Group on Border Management “Dialogue on Extra-regional Migration,” held on June 10, 2021, the RCM Member Countries agreed on the absence of records and data to warn about extra-regional irregular migration movements, as well as the urgency of increasing intergovernmental collaboration at the regional level to promote agile, safe, dignified and orderly assisted return processes.

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<sup>1</sup> Regional Conference on Migration, *Report of the meeting of the Working Group on Border Management*, held on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, p. 1.

During the Meeting of the Regional Consultation Group on Migration (RCGM), held on July 29 and 30, the Pro-Tempore Presidency of Mexico called on the governments of the region to strengthen the efforts of the RCM to translate the political dialogue into concrete actions and joint, functional and practicable initiatives in the short and medium term, to address the challenges related to the management of intra-regional and extra-regional irregular migration flows and the processes of returns in the current migration dynamics.

On August 11, 2021, at the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Panama, the High-Level Dialogue on Irregular Migration Flows was held, in which Foreign Ministers and High Representatives of the governments of Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, the United States, Mexico, Panama and Peru, participated, with the aim of identifying comprehensive and sustainable solutions to manage extra-regional irregular migration throughout the American continent.

## JUSTIFICATION

Irregular migration and forced displacement from the north of Central America, Brazil, Chile, Venezuela, Haiti and Cuba, has meant an exponential increase without precedent of migrants in transit, returnees, unaccompanied children, and applicants for recognition of refugee status and other international protection schemes, who due to their irregular migration status, undertake uncertain journeys through less secure routes, dangerous border crossings, longer transfer times and exposure to a wide range of risks and forms of violence.

The migrants who were detained by the US authorities on the northern border of Mexico<sup>2</sup>, come mainly from Mexico (28%), Honduras (21%) and Guatemala (17%). In the case of Mexico<sup>3</sup>, the main nationalities of irregular migrants presented to the immigration authorities are those of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. These three nationalities represent 90.53% of the total.

In 2021, irregular migration flows from Haiti and Cuba represent the largest extra-regional migration flow that enters Central America from the south of the continent, destined for the United States: from January to July, 13,877 irregular migrants were identified from Haiti and 6,059 from Cuba, who entered the Central American region through Panama. On the other hand, the US immigration authorities reported that during the same period they detained 24,024 Cubans and 21,118 Haitians in their attempt to illegally enter that country through its border with Mexico. In this country (Mexico) there is a higher entry of migrants of these nationalities compared to 2020; a significant percentage of them use the procedure to request international protection as a safe-conduct to move to the northern border of the country.

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<sup>2</sup> From January to August 2021

<sup>3</sup> From January to August 2021

From January to July of the current year, Mexico has received 64,378 requests for recognition of refugee status, more than 45,000 in Chiapas, which are requested mainly by Honduran (26,557), Haitian (13,255) and Cuban (6,446) nationals. This has challenged the institutional capacity of the Mexican State and has demonstrated that the only way to address this issue in a sustainable manner is through the sincere recognition of these challenges as a common cause for the region and, consequently, to collaborate in timely exchanges of information on current migratory trends, aimed at outlining joint lines of priority action for their attention.

Currently, there are 7,000 migrants stranded in Necoclí, Colombia, which means that to date, there are an average of 400 migrants entering Panama per day and 2,261 are in transit through that country. These flows would take approximately four weeks to reach the southern border of Mexico and another month to reach the U.S. border.

On the other hand, according to data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the U.S. Border Patrol has carried out more than 845,000 expulsions under Title 42<sup>4</sup> of the U.S. Code. Even though in November 2020 the U.S. government established that the order of temporary suspension of entry into the country would not apply to children and adolescents, in the first half of 2021 more than 450,000 returns were carried out.

Considering this context and recognizing that no country is exempt from the impacts of the complex range of migration and refugee challenges in the Americas, it is important to admit with self-criticism that these challenges cannot be resolved solely through unilateral or even bilateral efforts. It is imperative that the countries of the region use the entire existing institutional structure to articulate efforts to undertake a comprehensive and harmonized regional initiative that prioritizes sharing responsibility equitably among countries of origin, transit, destination and return.

Accordingly with mentioned above, the second technical meeting of the Working Group on Border Management, Current realities at the borders: How to manage irregular migratory flows and broaden protection schemes, will promote a dialogue based on action and pro-activity to establish innovative frameworks for regional governance, which can be materialized in the short term and are catalysts for alternatives to irregular migratory flows, including inter-institutional and intersectoral structures for migration management, coordinated and with sufficient resources, with projects aimed at establishing technical exchange mechanisms and infrastructure for the professionalization of border and migratory control, and the strengthening of international protection schemes and the agile, safe and orderly assisted returns of those persons whose cases do not apply for migratory regularization or international protection.

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<sup>4</sup> Since the order went into effect to date

## OBJECTIVES

- To define a functional and practicable route of action in the short and medium term to facilitate technical and infrastructural exchange aimed at border management and migration control, in order to strengthen the institutional capacities of migration governance of the RCM countries that are of transit and destination of intra-regional and extra-regional migrants.
- To explore ways to strengthen the agile, safe and orderly assisted return schemes of those nationals of the RCM Member Countries whose cases do not apply for migration regularization or any figure of international protection.
- To discuss strategies to strengthen the international protection systems in transit and destination countries, in order to broaden their response capacities to requests for recognition of refugee status or other international protection schemes.

## METHODOLOGY

**Virtual format.**

**Duration:** 3.5 hours

During the first hour of the dialogue, interventions will be heard from the Government's approach. There will be space for questions and comments from the panelists. This space will be exclusive for Member Countries.

For the second part of the dialogue, three countries will speak to explain the challenges of their international Protection Systems. Also, the participation of International Organizations and civil society is foreseen in order to provide recommendations aimed at strengthening these systems.

Likewise, the participatory dialogue of the countries of the region will be motivated with regards to the challenges, recommendations and possible routes of action for the comprehensive approach of intra-regional and extra-regional irregular migration flows, as well as for the strengthening of agile, safe, dignified, and orderly return schemes, as well as international protection systems of countries of transit and destination, from the perspective of the countries of origin, transit and destination, through triggering questions.

## PARTICIPANT'S PROFILE

The participation of the following is expected:

- **RCM focal points**



- **Members of the Working Group on Border Management**
- **Member countries:**
  - Officials or heads of areas of migration control, border management, officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs related to migration, officials of the Ministries of the Interior and any public servant who is responsible for the implementation of migration policies, and care and assistance to irregular migrants.
  - Officials or heads of areas in charge of international protection systems in the countries of the region.
- **Regional Network of Civil Organizations for Migration (RNCOM):** Their participation is foreseen only in the section on Strengthening international protection systems in the countries of the region.
- **International Organizations:** Their participation is foreseen only in the section on Strengthening international protection systems in the countries of the region.

**AGENDA: Monday, September 20, 2021**

**Meeting of the Working Group on Border Management**

(Virtual format)	
Mexico Time (GMT -5)	Activity
09:45	Connection to the platform and testing
10:00- 10:10	<b>Welcoming words</b> Mexico, Presidency Pro-Témpore of the RCM <b>INM- SRE</b>
<b>10:10-11:30</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT OF IRREGULAR AND MASSMIGRATION FLOWS</b> <i>*Exclusive session for Member Countries</i>
10:10-10:30	Report on the results of the High-Level Dialogue on Irregular Migratory Flows: Areas of action for the RCM countries <b>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Panama</b>
10:30-10:50	Best practices of the Guatemalan Migration Institute in the management of irregular migration flows and its collaboration with Mexico, Honduras and El Salvador. <b>Director of the Guatemalan Migration Institute</b>

10:50-11:10	Challenges in the management of agile, safe, dignified and orderly assisted return processes <b>National Institute of Migration - Mexico.</b>
11:10-11:20	Questions to panelists and dialogue of Member Countries <b>Moderator: SRE</b>
11:20-11:30	Break
<b>11:30-13:00</b>	<b>STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION.</b>
11:30-11:40	International Protection System in Costa Rica <b>Refugee Unit of the General Directorate of Migration and Foreigners' Affairs</b>
11:40-11:50	International Protection System in Panama <b>National Office for the Attention to Refugees of the Ministry of Government</b>
11:50-12:00	International Protection System in Mexico <b>Mexican Commission for Aid to Refugees (COMAR)</b>
12:00-12:15	Strengthening of Shelter Systems in transit countries in the region. <b>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)</b>
12:15-12:30	Recommendations and areas of collaboration in the management of returns of Central American migrants: How to ensure access to international protection for those in need <b>Regional Network of Civil Organizations on Migration (RNCOM)</b>
12:30-12:45	Migration alternatives and integration policies. <b>UNHCR</b>
12:45-13:00	Questions to panelists
13:00-13:15	Member Country Dialogue based on guiding questions for countries of origin, transit and destination. <b>Moderator: INM</b> <i>* Exclusive section for Member Countries</i>
13:15-13:25	Final comments <b>INM- SRE</b> <i>* Exclusive section for Member Countries</i>



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13:25-13:30	Closure of the session <b>RCM Executive Secretariat</b>
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