**CONCEPTUAL NOTE**

**I Parliamentary Encounter of the Member**

**Countries of the Regional Conference on**

**Migration**



# Introduction

El Salvador, as a country firmly committed to the human rights of migrants and convinced of the roles played by different segments of the population with respect to migratory flows, assumed the Presidency Pro-Tempore (PPT) of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) during the 2017 period, and thus has resolved to position and promote various initiatives related to Migrant Women, a very current theme with a strong impact on regional migratory dynamics.

When analyzing the theme of Migrant Women, it should be viewed from two angles, so that any measure on an internal scale as well as any action on the regional and international level considers the complexity of the theme in order to obtain the proper response, both with respect to benefitting from female migratory dynamics in favor of development and tending to the more sensitive needs of migrant women at the points of origin, transit, destination, and return.

As such, analysis of this theme should not only focus on remittance numbers and their impact on the development of families, communities, and countries of origin, but should also consider the importance of establishing protection mechanisms that allow improvement of the conditions under which women migrate, protect themselves, work, and develop professionally, as well as their family settings, fully exercising their rights and receiving support to overcome the difficult experiences they frequently face.

It is worth pointing out that women are durable agents of change, as they maintain very strong ties with their countries of origin, an unbreakable link with their families, and in general always seek the well-being of their loved ones, even when that means having to sacrifice in a foreign country, adapting to new traditions and cultures. In this sense, the role of women in migratory dynamics is ever more relevant, assuming different facets at the moment of migration, as many undertake the journey alone, while others are accompanied by their children, and others settle in the place of destination and subsequently spare no effort to achieve family reunification.

Within this framework, the general objective of the RCM Presidency Pro-Tempore held by El Salvador is to *position the theme of Migrant Women at the regional level, thus enabling the generation of initiatives that promote full respect for the human rights of migrant women and greater benefit from the migratory dynamics of this population segment in favor of the development of their families, communities, and countries of origin and destination.* This gives form to the following specific objectives:

* *Establish a priority regional agenda regarding migrant women, with the central pillar being full respect for the human rights of migrant women.*
* *From a comprehensive, specific, and inclusive perspective, respond to the positive and negative effects of the migration of women in the countries of origin, transit, destination, and return.*
* *Promote actions and programs that favor migrant women, as well as the exchange of updated information and good practices within the RCM Region, based on the strengthening of relations between institutions, migratory management areas, and civil society.*
* *Create spaces for learning and reflection that allow RCM Member Country citizens and officials to explore in depth the relationship between women, migration, and development.*

The **I Parliamentary Encounter of the Member Countries of the Regional Conference on Migration** forms part of Specific Objective No. 1 of the PPT’s Work Plan, which is to *“Establish a priority regional agenda regarding migrant women, with the central pillar being full respect for the human rights of migrant women.”*

# I. Justification

Legislative bodies have assumed an ever more relevant role in international relations and, as a result, in addressing themes of a regional and international nature such as migration. The concept of ‘parliamentary diplomacy’ encompasses the complex web of relations between Legislative Branches and their members, as well as the constitutional powers held by these bodies in the area of foreign policy, such as the ratification of conventions and treaties and the generation of legislative initiatives regarding various issues with international implications.

At the regional level, there are currently two significant spaces within the legislative sphere where the theme of migration is addressed. The first is the Forum of Legislative Branch Presidents of Central America and the Caribbean Basin (FOPREL),[[1]](#footnote-1) which includes *migrant rights* among its working themes. Then there is the Regional Parliamentary Council on Migration (COPAREM),[[2]](#footnote-2) a convergence space for building, promoting, and monitoring a shared regional agenda on international migration. COPAREM seeks to contribute to the preparation, review, approval, and updating of the legal frameworks that govern and institutionalize public policies on migration. It should be noted that these spaces do not include the participation of the United States or Canada, two of the principal destination countries for migrants from our region.

Considering the opportunities offered by parliamentary diplomacy and the regional efforts at convergence on the legislative level, the RCM Presidency Pro-Tempore currently held by El Salvador has determined as a priority the promotion of the **I Parliamentary Encounter of the Member Countries of the Regional Conference on Migration**[[3]](#footnote-3)for purposes of discussing and generating legislative lines of action and initiatives that favor migrant women in the region. This Encounter represents a valuable opportunity to include federal, state, and provincial lawmakers from the United States and Canada, destination countries for a majority of Central American and Caribbean migrants.

Worth mentioning is the fact that this is a new effort by the RCM that would set a precedent for parliamentary activity by giving a more relevant role to legislative bodies in articulating actions to address migration, particularly the theme of migrant women. With this conviction, the RCM Presidency Pro-Tempore can play an accompanying role in organizing the Encounter so that, upon conclusion of same, concrete legislative initiatives can be generated to benefit migrants in general and, specifically, migrant women.

# II. Description of the Intervention

Addressing the migratory theme within the current regional and international contexts, especially with respect to different population segments such as women, deserves actions from beyond the Executive Branch sphere. The complexity of migratory dynamics and the ever more important role of legislative bodies in public diplomacy create opportunities to join efforts in addressing such themes. This is why the Presidency Pro-Tempore of the Regional Conference on Migration, currently held by El Salvador, has deemed it strategic to combine efforts at the parliamentary level to achieve a greater scope for the expected results in favor of migrant women. Therefore, the I Parliamentary Encounter of the Member Countries of the Regional Conference on Migration, the details of which are set forth below, makes evident the inclusive vision of the current RCM PPT.

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| **Title** | I Parliamentary Encounter of the Member Countries of the Regional Conference on Migration |
| **General Objective** | Generate a space for awareness-raising and constructive debate at the inter-parliamentary level on the theme of migrant women, leading to legislative initiatives in favor of this segment of the population. |

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| **Specific Objectives** | * Exchange information on the theme of migrant women and how to address same from the legislative spaces at the national and regional levels. * Establish joint working mechanisms designed to promote legislative initiatives that favor the migrant population, with emphasis on migrant women. * Generate a political declaration supporting the migrant population, especially the role played by women in migratory dynamics and the development of their countries of origin and destination. |
| **Participants** | * RCM Presidency Pro-Tempore. * Lawmakers from the eleven Member Countries of the Regional Conference on Migration (members of the Foreign Affairs and Gender Committees). * Representatives from international agencies that work with migratory issues. * RCM Technical Secretariat. * Association of Former Salvadoran Congresswomen (ASPARLEXSAL). |
| **Expected Results** | * Declaration on Migrant Women. * Concrete legislative initiatives in favor of migrant women. * Proposed short- and medium-term monitoring mechanism/road map. |

# III. Beneficiaries and Geographical Coverage

Migrant women from the RCM Member Countries (Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Dominican Republic).

**IV. Execution Period**

First week of September 2017, in Chiapas, Mexico.

# V. Agencies and Bodies Involved (Partners)

El Salvador:

* Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by way of the Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad in its capacity as RCM Presidency Pro-Tempore.
* Legislative Assembly, by way of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Central American Integration, and Salvadorans Abroad.

At the regional/international level:

* RCM Technical Secretariat.
* Parliaments of the remaining ten RCM Member Countries.

1. International body in charge of inter-parliamentary cooperation for harmonizing and synchronizing Member Country legislation. It serves as a legislative integration mechanism whose agreed-upon standards become framework laws that are introduced into each legislative body and, responding to the characteristics of each country, are then discussed, consulted, and approved. FOPREL is comprised of the Congressional Presidents/Chairpersons of Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico (both houses of Congress). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Regional Parliamentary Assembly (highest level of COPAREM) is comprised of the Chairpersons of the legislative committees from each country that address migration-related issues, along with those from the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and the Dominican Republic. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)