NGO Statement on the Americas
Agenda item 3(a)iii

Thank you, Chair.

This statement has been drafted through a wide consultation with NGOs and attempts to reflect the diversity of views within the NGO community.

We begin by acknowledging the response of the Americas to the global refugee crisis.

We congratulate the Canadian government by expanding the intake of refugees from Syria by 25,000 through immediate government sponsorship and granting them with permanent residency.

We congratulate the Brazilian government and UNHCR for signing an agreement to enhance the special visa program for Syrian refugees.

We congratulate Uruguay on its efforts to host Syrian refugee families, and urge the Uruguayan government to re-assess the effectiveness of its refugee integration program.

We congratulate Argentina on keeping its open door policy for Syrian refugees and urge the Argentinian government to continue increasing the number of refugees accepted in the country.

Considering the growing number of people fleeing Syria, we emphasize the collective responsibility of the Americas to help those refugees.

We urge all countries of the region to:
- establish special refugee programs, focusing on facilitating refugees’ full integration in society,
- and increase the number of refugees accepted within borders of respective States.

Tripartite Commissions

We highlight the achievements of the Commission for the Protection of People Displaced by Violence in Honduras as a good practice of good collaboration between institutions. We
congratulate the Bolivian government for participating in a 2015 tripartite action plan in order to implement the Brazil Plan of Action.

We call upon Governments to establish and strengthen tripartite commissions for an effective response to the needs of refugees and displaced people.

**Mexico**

NGOs express their concern about persistent detention and deportation of migrants and asylum seekers, despite the continued visibility of human rights violations from the implementation of the “Plan Frontera Sur” that impedes the entry of people fleeing Central America into Mexico.

We call on government of Mexico to:
- guarantee the respect of human rights for detained persons.
- stop detaining children and families based solely on their immigration status.
- immediately release persons who are detained longer than legally established.
- protect asylum-seekers and prevent abuses committed by agents of the state.

We call on the UNHCR to support the Mexican government to strengthen the identification and protection systems for vulnerable groups.

**The Northern Triangle: Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras**

We express concern about growing number of people forcibly displaced due to violence and criminal activities in these countries. We welcome the work of the Civil Society Round Table on Forced Displacement by Violence and Organized Crime of El Salvador.

We call on the governments of El Salvador and Guatemala to publicly acknowledge that gangs, police and military actors are a primary cause of internal and external displacement.

We urge the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to:
- commit to developing and implementing a humanitarian response to victims of violence,
- undertake effective measures to contain violence within their countries.

We call upon Governments in neighboring countries of Mexico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama and UNHCR (in a supportive role) to:
- accept displaced people into their territories,
- ensure that all people seeking refugee status be guaranteed due process and adjudicate asylum applications consistent with the 1951 Refugee Convention, Cartagena Declaration and Brazil Plan of Action.
Nicaragua

We highlight the recent closure of the Nicaraguan border to Cubans transiting from Costa Rica and Panama, and call upon the Nicaraguan government to apply a protection-sensitive policy towards mixed migratory flows.

Costa Rica

We commend the Costa Rican government’s efforts to solve the situation regarding Cubans stranded in its territory. We recognize the role of civil society which helped develop a durable solution to the crisis.

Dominican Republic

We express our concern about situation of Haitians and people of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic. We acknowledge the dialogue between the government, civil society, international community and affected populations to solve the crisis. However, we stress to need to ensure that all people of Haitian descent have identification documents issued so that they can exercise their right to vote.

We urge the government to:
- cease deportations of Haitian immigrants.
- ensure Dominicans of Haitian descent are issued identity documents.

We call on the UNHCR to:
- invest in protection of the rights of stateless people in Dominican Republic.
- support the government in implementing durable solutions.

Colombia

Bearing in mind the current peace process and serious human rights situation in Colombia, we call on the Colombian government to:
- encourage agreements with refugee hosting States and those countries willing to implement resettlement programs to create an international system that allows for the identification of Colombians abroad who would like to be compensated under the Victims Rights Law.
- guarantee the local integration in refugee hosting countries, including permanent residency, for those victims who do not want to return.
**Destination Countries for Colombian Refugees**

Despite the peace processes, we express our concern about the persistent violence and human rights abuses in Colombia.

We call on Ecuador, Venezuela, Costa Rica and Panama governments to:

- consider the number of people continuing to flee generalized violence in Colombia.
- fulfill international protection obligations for refugees seeking protection and guarantee permanent residency of Colombian population within their borders.
- ensure that refugees’ and asylum-seekers’ identification documents are sufficient to access social services, education, employment and financial services.

We call on the international community to support UNHCR initiatives that include the assistant returnee program and others that enable the protection of rights for the Colombian refugee population.

**Ecuador**

We have reported cases of persons in need of international protection and the denial of admission and deportation from airports. We call on the Ecuadorian government to:

- fulfill international protection obligations for refugees seeking at any point of entrance, including airports.
- reconsider the implementation of detention and deportation strategies.

**Brazil**

We express our concern about reported cases of denial of admission and deportations taking place in the airports. We call upon the Brazilian government to stop unlawful deportations and fully implement procedures that would allow asylum seekers access to due process and determination of their status.

This statement can be found at www.icvanetwork.org.

Thank you Chair.