

## NGO Statement on the Americas and the Caribbean

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of NGOs.

In the Americas, mixed movements soared to new record levels in 2022, both in volume and complexity. The protection space shrank largely due to new restrictive migratory policies and measures limiting safe routes and unrestricted mobility, putting displaced people at higher risk.

NGOs are worried about the negative impacts including GBV, education, food security, livelihoods, health, water, and sanitation in the context of economic slowdown. We must address these challenges.

Additionally, NGOs and authorities continue to respond with insufficient capacity, particularly in hard-to-reach and border locations. UNHCR's leadership in maintaining a well-funded and coordinated response is urgent.

We also hope the Los Angeles and Buenos Aires Declarations can improve the deteriorated protection space and encourage UNHCR to ensure NGOs' meaningful participation within those frameworks.

There is a **regional displacement crisis at play in the Darién Gap**, with increasing numbers of Ecuadorians and Colombians alongside Venezuelans. This trend is explained by barriers and policy changes in southern countries that hinder the regularisation of Venezuelans and their integration in a difficult economic context as well as the deteriorating quality of life, natural hazards, and increased violence, that exacerbate displacement conditions in many countries.

Recently, due to continued restrictive U.S. migration policies, displaced populations found themselves stranded in various countries or compelled to return home. Human mobility is now characterized by ebbs and flows, northwards, southwards and internally. This humanitarian crisis is multi-faceted and includes unemployment, discrimination, physical and sexual violence, food insecurity, and lack of basic services.

**In Colombia**, violence had immense humanitarian impacts and increased needs in cities where displaced populations seek shelter from conflict. Over 7.7 million people remain in dire need of protection and humanitarian assistance; displaced populations are particularly exposed to protection risks stemming from the conflict.

Since October 2022, **Haiti** has plunged further into a multidimensional and complex crisis. Political violence, instability, human rights violations including attacks on NGOs are common, all combined with shortage of fuel, a cholera outbreak, and famine. Desperate Haitians flee by sea but increasingly face detention and returns, despite UNHCR's call against this practice.

**In The Dominican Republic**, the expulsion of people with Haitian descent led to high levels of family separation, protection risks and basic rights violations. Expulsions affect their resilience and self-reliance, school attendance, and medical treatments.

Consequently, urgent humanitarian aid is needed, along with respect for due process and human rights by Dominican authorities. A solution on access to documentation for Haitians outside Haiti is needed, as concrete progress on implementing the 2014 Dominican Naturalisation Law.

**In Venezuela**, the economic and political situation remains critical. Natural hazards, wave of violence, and environmental security issues in the Orinoco Mining Arc further explain the continuing exodus. Displaced Venezuelans are vulnerable to unemployment, discrimination, food insecurity, and risks such as human trafficking and sexual abuse.

**Nicaraguans** flee to Central America and beyond. Record asylum applications were registered in Costa Rica, Mexico, and the U.S. in 2022. UNHCR and donors must redouble their efforts to keep this situation visible, including risks of statelessness due to denationalisations based on political grounds.

**The Northern Central America** is currently dealing with increased mixed flows amid an existing multifaceted humanitarian crisis, aggravated by cumulative effects of climate shocks that impact food security. Displacement figures including IDPs from these countries continue to be alarming, especially without robust measures to address needs.

**At the U.S.-Mexico border**, last year 2.5 million expulsions under “Title 42” were implemented. Despite the several humanitarian parole programmes allowing Venezuelans, Haitians, Cubans, and Nicaraguans to apply for permission to temporarily stay in the U.S., those lacking connections and resources are compelled to attempt crossing the border irregularly. Moreover, a recently proposed U.S. policy, if enacted, would prevent asylum applications from individuals crossing the border irregularly or transiting through a third country without applying for protection there first.

Based on this overview, **NGOs call to:**

1. Develop strategies to address human mobility considering all nationalities and root causes. Current mobility flows are composed of many nationalities. Strategies, programmes, and funding must be designed appropriately.
2. Develop alternative approaches and temporary solutions in responding to the lack of access to documentation faced by Haitians and Venezuelans within and outside their countries.
3. Facilitate the development of coordinated asylum and migratory policies to minimise the ripple effects that changes in one country’s policy can have on individuals traveling to find safety. Promoting a human rights approach to border management is also critical.
4. Harmonise and streamline the various existing humanitarian coordination mechanisms to reduce duplication and overload for many humanitarian actors.
5. Redouble efforts to maintain the visibility of the region’s displacement crisis and ensure timely and adequate international funding to respond, particularly integrating humanitarian funding mechanisms into development programmes reaching civil society and reducing the hoarding and bureaucratising effects.
6. Renew effective coordination of humanitarian leadership amid increased mixed flows, especially through existing mechanisms, and in cooperation with governments and NGOs.
7. Provide a clear action plan for the Los Angeles and Buenos Aires Declarations and ensure humanitarian contributions.
8. Develop policies, plans and funding mechanisms to strengthen, under a responsibility-sharing focus, the regional response to the climate drivers of forced displacement.
9. Encourage sustained social cohesion initiatives by recognising the positive contributions of displaced populations to their host communities.
10. Engage organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people and host communities to address persisting stigma, racism, and discrimination.
11. Redouble efforts to protect and fund the work of Mexican advocates, defenders, and service providers in border areas and inside Mexico.

The region’s historical asylum tradition shows that governments can generate novel ideas, work together, and achieve challenging agreements. NGOs reaffirm our commitment to partner with UNHCR, governments and donors to protect lives.

Further details are available on [icvanetwork.org](http://icvanetwork.org).

Thank you.