

**NGO statement on the Americas**

Dear Chair,

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

The Americas faces unprecedented displacement, driven by conflict, violence, climate change, political instability, and economic crisis. New protection and complementary pathways and local integration are overshadowed by rising insecurity, discrimination, and increased enforcement, generating secondary migration or forcibly return including children and women.

NGOs highlight:

**Firstly**, with visa requirements blocking safer routes, over half a million people traveled to the treacherous Darién Gap in 2023. Harsh conditions, armed groups, and migration impact political economies, causing compounded protection risks. NGOs report insufficient humanitarian support, abuses during crossings, rising vulnerability including in children, emotional exhaustion, and increased gender-based violence.

**Secondly**, since May 2023, seeking asylum requires an appointment at one of the eight ports of entry using the CBP One App, which can lead to a six-month waiting period thus exposing asylum seekers to further risks. Unauthorized border crossing renders individuals ineligible for asylum leading to the repatriation of Guatemalans and Hondurans fleeing to the U.S. border. Venezuelans are also returned to Mexico along with Cubans, Nicaraguans, and Haitians. CBP One and the U.S. regulation barring asylum eligibility to almost all of those who cross the border unauthorized – a policy that violates Article 31 of the Refugee Convention by penalizing refugees for their manner of entry.

**Thirdly**, deaths and disappearances remain unreported along migration routes, due to limited access and the absence of official statistics such as in the US-Mexico border, the Caribbean, and the Darién Gap. Tragically, robust protection mechanisms and strengthened cooperation between States to address this issue are lacking.

**Fourthly**, Venezuelans' movement towards the United States results from ineffective integration in several countries. Similarly, Mexico requires increased investment and economic integration programs. Costa Rica's recent policies limit asylum seekers' labor markets access, hindering integration. Drivers of secondary migration by Venezuelans and Nicaraguans include limited economic and educational opportunities, lack of access to health services, and rising xenophobia.

Last year, the U.S. initiated the Safe Mobility Initiative in Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Guatemala, that screens individuals for protection and other legal pathways, contingent on certain conditions. Today, the majority of applicants have been screened for resettlement, with several thousand approved. A few hundred applied to the parole program, though labor pathways are yet to begin. The Initiative's success depends on expanding eligibility and securing commitments from more countries for protection and other legal pathways.

**Fifth,** Haiti's humanitarian situation is deteriorating, driven by insecurity, violence, and forced returns mainly from the Dominican Republic through interdiction at sea - including of unaccompanied children - and return flights despite UNHCR's non-return policy. Haiti is unsafe for returns and needs increased aid to address gender-based violence and food insecurity.

In Colombia, civilians suffer from the impacts of conflict, experiencing attacks by armed actors, child recruitment and school attacks. Abuses by armed groups in remote areas have reached similar levels to 2016. Nearly 6 million Colombians live in areas where non-state armed actors are active, while humanitarian access deteriorates.

In Venezuela, thousands of people are internally displaced to mining areas bordering Brazil and Guyana. Clashes between the government and criminal gangs controlling mining activities and involving child labour and sexual exploitation result in violence, extortion, and forced evictions.

Finally, we are concerned about attempts to reduce the Humanitarian Response Plans' financial value, lowering target populations, affecting crucial sectors despite growing humanitarian needs. This trend should not be replicated in the Regional Migrant and Refugee Response Plan, and we disagree with arbitrary cuts influenced by domestic donor priorities.

The 40th anniversary of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration is significant. The new 10-year regional action plan presents a critical opportunity to collectively tackle current challenges. NGOs urge explicit commitments for disasters and climate-related displacement, collaboration among stakeholders, and funding from international donors, financial entities, and the private sector to bolster humanitarian and development efforts, spanning emergency and long-term solutions.

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

Thank you.