

Towards Regional Governance on Migration and Forced Displacement in the Americas: Summit of the Americas Side Event

June 9, 2022 from 9 AM-12 PM PDT



Migration was one of the primary topics on the agenda as leaders from across the Western hemisphere met in Los Angeles last week for the IX Summit of the Americas. To build on this moment of regional dialogue and bring together representatives of government, international organizations, civil society, and academia, the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), jointly with the Organization of American States (OAS) Department of Social Inclusion, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labor Organization (ILO), Migration Policy Institute (MPI), World Refugee and Migration Council (WRMC), Open Society Foundations, and Emerson Collective organized a side event to discuss opportunities to strengthen regional governance on migration and protection across the Americas.

The event began with opening remarks from the Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, Nestor Mendez, and PADF Executive Director Katie Taylor. They offered an overview of the integration, protection, and humanitarian challenges facing governments in the region amid unprecedented levels of migration and the importance of not only strengthening international coordination, but of working with local organizations, the private sector, and other key partners to ensure policies and programs are responsive to local needs.



The first panel, Addressing the Root Causes of Irregular Migration and Forced Displacement, began with initial reflections from the Foreign Minister of Honduras, Eduardo Enrique Reina, on the complex and often intersecting motivators of migration and how the international community can support local governments in mitigating these factors. This was followed by contributions from Ambassador Julieta Valls Noyes of the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Diego Beltrand of the IOM Regional Response to the Venezuela Situation, and Ariel Ruiz Soto from MPI about existing practices, and further opportunities, to improve conditions in migrant-sending countries and build protection and labor migration pathways that permit safer and more regular movement.



The second panel built on these themes, examining how regional mechanisms such as the Regional Conference on Migration, the Quito Process, and the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework, can serve as starting points to build common language and principles on migration governance, drawing on shared responsibility, protection, and humanitarianism. The speakers, Clayton Alderman of the U.S. National Security Council, U.S. Congressman Raul Ruiz, Jose Samaniego of UNHCR, Maria Jose Espinosa of the Center for Democracy in the Americas, and Kevin Cassidy of the ILO, however, highlighted that agreement on common principles must also be followed by concrete deliverables in practice, prioritizing accountability to migrants and host communities alike.



Keynote speaker, Colombian President Ivan Duque discussed what inclusive migration governance can look like in practice, describing his country's historic Temporary Protection Status for undocumented Venezuelans, how regularization can bring migrants out of the shadows and into national employment, education, health, and cultural systems, and what other countries considering short- and long-term regularization schemes can learn from Colombia's experience. Finally, Maricarmen Plata of the OAS and Eduardo Stein, Joint Special Representative of UNHCR and IOM for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela, offered concluding remarks, highlighting the importance of building on these conversations as migration and forced displacement, especially in the face of climate change and ongoing political, social, and economic crises, is unlikely to abate in the years to come.