

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME
95TH STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING
24 – 26 MARCH 2026

Regional Update for Latin America and the Caribbean
NGO Collective Statement – Oral Statement

Dear Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

This statement was developed in consultation with NGOs from Latin America and the Caribbean, including those led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

The Americas continues to face a displacement crisis whose scale far exceeds existing protection and response mechanisms.

Shifts in mixed migration flows remain worrying: although crossings through the Darién have decreased this does not mean that protection risks driving displacement have disappeared. Securitised migration policies increasingly restrict safe access to territory and limit asylum procedures. Border closures heighten the risks of trafficking, sexual violence, and death.

We commend those States that have legal frameworks conducive for refugee and migrant protection. We urge increased political will and dedicated funding to implement them.

Internal displacement also persists as a direct consequence of violence, conflict, and disasters. In many countries, the absence of legal frameworks leaves hundreds of thousands of people without recognition, protection, or access to essential services.

Across the region, multiple crises are worsening protection needs. Communities in Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Haiti, Honduras, and Guatemala continue to face violence and remain exposed to recruitment, disappearance, trafficking, and exploitation. Children and adolescents are particularly affected, facing severe risks to their safety and barriers to accessing fundamental rights. In Mexico, violence generates ongoing internal displacement while simultaneously receiving those seeking asylum. Nearly eight million Venezuelans remain outside their country, at protection risk and unable to return. Cuba's energy and services crisis has intensified needs and contributed to rising asylum claims.

The risk of statelessness persists in the region. People who lose their documents due to displacement or deportation face similar barriers. Without nationality or legal identity, people are extremely vulnerable and access to fundamental rights becomes nearly impossible.

Amid these crises, local and community organisations play an essential role. Their frontline work shows that sustainable change happens at the local level. They remain the first responders in border, urban, and rural contexts - yet they receive only a fraction of required funding, a gap exacerbated by recent cuts.

Given this overall context, we recommend that States strengthen asylum systems and formally recognise internal displacement. This includes through:

- ensuring access to territory with agile, protection-centered asylum procedures;
- adopting and implementing protection frameworks for internally displaced persons; and
- guaranteeing universal birth registration and accessible documentation to prevent statelessness.

Moreover, NGOs urge Member States to ensure that:

- decisions related to returns or deportations comply with international standards on safety, dignity, voluntariness, and non-refoulement.
- commitments made under the Quito Process, MIRPS, and the Chile Action Plan be reinforced and better aligned, adapting to new displacement dynamics and emerging transit and destination countries.

To UNHCR, NGOs ask the agency to continue supporting implementation of national asylum frameworks, elevate internal displacement as a regional priority, strengthen technical support to States, and improve monitoring and early-warning systems on returns and deportations.

To donor governments, NGOs urge the prioritization of flexible, predictable funding, including the commitment to allocate at least 25% to local and refugee-led organisations to provide assistance where State responses are absent or insufficient, including in border and return areas.

Finally, we encourage donors to increase funding for independent human rights monitoring and for age, gender and diversity sensitive data systems to strengthen civil society's work in return and deportation contexts.

We encourage all States to strengthen their collaboration with civil society including refugee-led organisations, and to demonstrate the political will needed to ensure that people forced to flee are safe, protected, and able to enjoy their rights.

This statement is available on ICVANETWORK.ORG

I thank you.