



SUMMARY OF THE “DIALOGUE MEETING BETWEEN MEMBER STATES OF RCM AND SOME COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF IRREGULAR EXTRA-CONTINENTAL MIGRATION FLOWS”

**Day 1
Thursday, September 20, 2012**

The objective of the meeting was to promote contact between the regions with the aim of identifying and discussing the challenges that can be addressed either by Member States of RCM or by African and Asian countries. To this end, problems relating to extra-continental migration flows were identified through discussions of various topics. The following can be highlighted:

1. The first speaker, Mr Robert G. Paiva of the International Organization for Migration presented a general overview of the dynamics of extra-continental migration in the region, pointing out that extra-continental migrants travel along the same routes and work with the same smugglers as regional migrants in transit through Central America to the United States. However, extra-continental migrants pay additional amounts of money to smugglers in countries of transit, thus significantly increasing costs relating to migration. Furthermore, Mr Paiva illustrated some routes that extra-continental migrants use to travel from their countries of origin to this region, highlighting the Moscow – Cuba – Quito and Amsterdam – Quito routes.

While different patterns have been observed in terms of the dynamics of extra-continental migration – according to nationality and the motive for migrating (for economic reasons or to seek refuge) – relevant actions to address this issue need to be coordinated based on common difficulties and challenges.

Difficulties:

- Limited data are available and different formats are used. As a result, conducting a comparative historical analysis of extra-continental migration flows becomes a complex task.
- Communication and cooperation between countries in the region and countries of origin is limited.
- Certifying nationality, age, and personal status and identifying protection and assistance needs.

Challenges:

- To gain more knowledge on the languages and cultural characteristics of each country of origin of extra-continental migrants.
- To seek strategies to identify migrant smugglers and traffickers.



- To improve communication with migrants with the aim of obtaining more personal data and information about their migration routes.
- To promote cooperation to provide assistance and protection to migrants in vulnerable situations, with a focus on unaccompanied boys, girls, and adolescents.

2. Mr Oliver Bush, Coordinator of the RCM Technical Secretariat, presented an overview on how the topic has been addressed within the framework of RCM and the actions that have been implemented in regard to irregular extra-continental migration flows within the framework of RCM. In addition, Mr Bush presented the objectives of this RCM workshop.

3. Mr Ernesto Rodríguez of the Migration Policy Unit of Mexico spoke about the evolution and primary trends of irregular extra-continental migration flows in Mexico within a regional context, stating that these flows only represent 2-3% of the total flow of irregular migrants in transit through Mexican territory, while migrants from Central American countries account for 92-95% of migration flows.

Furthermore, Mr Rodriguez addressed the difficulties in managing the return of migrants from African and Asian countries. He mentioned that only 4% of the total numbers of such migrants enter into a repatriation process. In addition, Mr Rodriguez described one of the possible routes used by extra-continental migrants to reach Mexico. However, Mexico is not their final destination but only a transit country on their journey toward the United States or Canada as their final destination.

4. Representatives from countries of origin made a series of presentations about their consular structure in the region, capacities to provide assistance to irregular migrants from their countries, and an overview of the irregular migration flows from their countries to the region.

- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka as countries of origin all stated that their consular offices and services for the region of Latin America are placed at the United States and their primary roles are to resolve cases of migrants with expired visas or criminal records, to support repatriation processes, to confirm identities, and in general, to collaborate with national authorities.
- All of them mentioned that reliable and sufficient statistical data are not available to verify if the flow of migrants from these countries is increasing or decreasing. Some, however, stated that efforts are being made to establish additional consular offices in Mexico and Latin America and thus, to collaborate more



closely with transit and destination countries of irregular migrants, whether through identifying them or issuing travel documents. Bangladesh confirmed the opening of offices in Mexico and Brazil proximately.

- It was highlighted that technology platforms are in place in each country to provide information and support and to enable direct contact with relevant immigration authorities to address specific situations of migrants from extra-continental countries of origin.
- In addition, it was acknowledged the generalized problem of certifying the identity of migrants that are detained in a transit country and of whom authorities suspect that they come from a given African or Asian country. In addition, migrants do not cooperate to help establish their identity since they do not wish to be repatriated, and appropriate technology is not available to establish the identity of these migrants – for example, through biometric data, photos, or finger prints.

As a result of this discussion the possibility was highlighted of developing a contact data base including all available information on consular offices and relevant procedures to identify migrants, with the aim of developing a tool to enable communication between countries of origin, transit, and destination. In addition, the possibility was mentioned of documenting migrants through copies of passports registered in the countries they enter on their journey through Latin America.

5. Topic 1: Key practical challenges in certifying the identity of irregular extra-continental migrants and obtaining access to identity and travel documents of these migrants

Representatives from Mexico explained the procedure followed for foreign nationals entering the country in an irregular manner and particularly highlighted key challenges, including certification of the identity of extra-continental migrants.

In regard to the topic of certifying the identity of migrants from Asian and African countries, it was stated that a problem exists in terms of consular notification and the centrality of consular offices. This limits actions that could be taken by immigration authorities to implement relevant procedures for foreign nationals.

Furthermore, representatives from Mexico presented alternative actions that are implemented by Mexico to address irregular extra-continental migration flows when the period established by the Immigration Act to resolve such cases is exceeded: either granting an exit permit (with migrants financing their own return) or a regularization permit (which stimulates irregular migration, to a certain extent).



6. Open Discussion: Delegation from Panama

The objective of this discussion was to identify specific solutions and collect useful information to address practical challenges relating to certification of the identity and nationality of irregular migrants.

- Countries of origin stated that the best ways or means to certify the identity of citizens from their countries are the following:
 1. Through a copy of a passport issued by the relevant migration authority.
 2. Through interviews of consular representatives and migrants.
 3. And, if appropriate, through questionnaires and other types of documents enabling identification, such as birth certificates, etc.
 4. India highlighted that a questionnaire with 20 parameters is used, and if 5 of them are confirmed the relevant authority is able to issue travel documents.

7. Topic 2: The Delegation from Costa Rica presented the key practical challenges to establish truthful communication with irregular extra-continental migrants in order to determine their protection and assistance needs and provide immediate protection and assistance.

- First, it was mentioned that migrants in transit need to be informed about assistance options and various challenges were identified. The initial challenges include communication (identifying the language, access to interpreters, the capacity of immigration officers to assist migrants, ensuring accessible due process), verifying identity, nationality and – in some cases – family links (parents), a preliminary assessment of the profile of the migrant to guide relevant actions, and verifying the migrant's health status (in coordination with health units).
- Challenges relating to assistance include the following: a physical and emotional medical assessment and assistance; coordinating with and convening various institutions to enable addressing the specific situation of each migrant; training of officers from other institutions; addressing the limited presence – or the absence – of representatives from extra-continental countries to provide consular assistance, through online interviews, access to shelter, food (western food is sometimes not appropriate for extra-continental migrants), and preliminary documents.



- Finally, the challenges relating to protection include taking protection actions, in accordance with the vulnerability profile, for unaccompanied boys, girls, and adolescents or victims of migrant smuggling or other crimes; temporary immigration documents for refuge seekers; and programmes or alternatives for the voluntary or assisted return of migrants to their country of origin or a third receiving country.
- Once countries have identified specific weaknesses they could help address these challenges.

8. Open Discussion: Delegation from Honduras

- Central America is only a transit region.
- Information needs to be exchanged on best practices to address the issue.
- Establishing extraordinary mechanisms for extra-continental foreign nationals since they do not intend to stay in transit countries.
- Resources: the high cost involved in assisting extra-continental migrants and enabling them to return to their countries of origin.
- Food and languages are of no small importance; in general, individual interviews cannot be conducted due to lack of knowledge of the language and the absence of interpreters.
- Countries of origin requested that transit countries punish and prosecute intermediaries or contact persons from migrant smuggling networks in the region.
- Consular protection actions have been implemented within the framework of RCM. As a result, guidelines for the return of unaccompanied boys, girls, and adolescents and guidelines for the identification of migrants have been developed, among others. Identifying best practices in countries of origin should be considered, with the aim of using them as examples.
- Finally, within the framework of this meeting efforts will be made to strengthen dialogue, following up on this first meeting between countries of origin, transit, and destination. A meeting of representatives from consulates in Washington DC will be considered, with the aim of including representatives from each consulate and enabling them to get to know each other and establish potential cooperation mechanisms in this sphere.



Day 2 Friday, September 21, 2012

On the second day of the meeting the items included on the agenda were addressed through an open dialogue, structured as two discussions of specific topics. The primary problems of the phenomenon of extra-continental migration were highlighted from the perspective of countries of origin, transit, and destination of extra-continental migrants. Topics on how to prevent and combat migrant smuggling were addressed, as well as challenges relating to the return and reintegration of extra-continental migrants.

1. Topic 3: Mr Salvador Gutiérrez of the International Organization for Migration addressed the primary challenges in combating migrant smuggling and trafficking, explaining that due to the nature of extra-continental irregular migration only limited information is available on the topic. As a result, limited results have been achieved in implementing actions to prevent and combat the smuggling and trafficking of extra-continental migrants.

Mr Gutiérrez mentioned that the causes, modes, and consequences of the crimes of smuggling and trafficking of extra-continental migrants are similar to those facing regional migrants. Furthermore, he stated that significant differences exist in terms of the involvement of organized criminal groups, limited awareness by migrants of their rights, and a greater dependency of migrants on migrant smuggling networks due to language, lack of support networks while in transit, lack of access to financial resources, and geographical distances and cultural differences.

Possibilities for Cooperation:

- To disseminate information in countries of origin about the risks associated to migrant smuggling and trafficking on the Mesoamerican migration route.
- To disseminate information in countries of origin and through consular offices in the Americas about a directory of resources and services available in the Mesoamerican region to provide assistance and protection to migrants and mechanisms to report crimes and gain access to justice.
- To establish cooperation agreements in order to expedite the certification of nationality and identity, including the possibility of conducting joint online identification interviews – especially for migrant women and boys, girls, and adolescents.
- To exchange police information in order to facilitate locating and identifying migrant smuggling and trafficking networks.
- To work in close collaboration with diasporas in countries of destination, with the aim of disseminating information about the risks associated to migration and warning potential migrants about the danger of getting involved with migrant smuggling and trafficking networks.



2. Open Discussion: Delegation from the United States of America

The objective of the discussion was to identify specific solutions in combating migrant smuggling and trafficking. All countries participated in the discussion.

- The need was expressed to share information in order to provide greater security to migrants in transit and dismantle migrant smuggling and trafficking networks.
- To strengthen collaboration and coordination mechanisms between invited countries and Member States of RCM with the aim of improving information exchange.
- Countries of transit and destination considered that it is necessary to seek collaboration of carrier companies in order to verify records and track routes and migrant smuggling and trafficking networks.
- Countries of destination committed to supporting Central American countries to ensure the security of migrants, and they are willing to provide the required technology, training, and security systems to identify and dismantle migrant smuggling and trafficking networks.
 - For example: Representatives from the US talked about the strategy that is currently being implemented with airlines to identify potential traffickers by comparing passenger lists with the data bases from the Department of Homeland Security.
- The need was expressed to strengthen communication with South American countries through dialogue between RCM and the South American Conference on Migration.

3. Topic 4. Delegation from El Salvador made a brief presentation on the presence of irregular extra-continental migration flows in their country and addressed some of the difficulties in terms of logistics and financial aspects as well as challenges relating to the return of migrants.

- In 2009 El Salvador implemented immigration controls at its land borders aimed at reducing the flow of irregular extra-continental migrants into the country and hindering the movement of gangs across borders, among others.
- In regard to the return of extra-continental migrants, it was mentioned that the primary obstacles to an effective management of the repatriation process include lack of a focalized budget and lack of permanent interpreters at the centres that provide comprehensive assistance to migrants.
- In regard to challenges, the following were mentioned:
 - To develop and implement a protocol of action to certify identities, establish profiles, provide protection to migrants, and develop a regional cooperation plan for the return of migrants ensuring full respect for the human rights of migrants.



- To develop a comprehensive information system on extra-continental migration flows.
- To implement the protocol against the smuggling of migrants by land, sea, and air in an expedited manner.
- To establish an alternative for regional legalization and to develop protocols for those migrants that cannot be returned due to their vulnerable situation in countries in the region.

4. Open Discussion. Delegation from Mexico guided a discussion aimed at identifying specific solutions and collecting useful information to address practical challenges relating to the return and reintegration of extra-continental migrants.

- An open dialogue should be promoted between countries of origin, transit, and destination in order to establish effective and feasible mechanisms for the management of the return and reintegration of extra-continental migrants.
- The importance was highlighted of establishing consular offices in key geographic areas within the Central American region, and a best practice was mentioned that has been implemented by countries in the region: establishing joint consulates at the southern border of Mexico.
- Common needs identified in the region include the following:
 - To raise funds to cover expenses relating to return processes;
 - To promote the assisted return of migrants to their countries of origin;
 - To exchange information;
 - To certify the identity of extra-continental migrants.
- Countries of origin stated that funds are not available to implement mechanisms to reintegrate irregular migrants. Delegation from India highlighted that the funds that are available for the reintegration of migrants are oriented toward the reintegration of regular migrants.

5. An overview of the agreements and upcoming challenges. The Secretary of the RCM Technical Secretariat highlighted the following proposals, conclusions and courses of action:

- *To develop a data base with information on consulates and embassies located in the region, with the aim of improving communication with countries of origin;*
- *Share with countries of origin, when possible, copies of passports of extra-continental irregular migrants to help identify them;*
- *Use the technology, such as Skype and video conferences, for the interviews by the origin countries consulates;*



- *To hold a meeting with consuls from countries of origin, transit, and destination in Washington, DC and to establish a working group;*
- *United States offered their support to help RCM countries to install the APIS system (where there isn't yet installed) and interconnect them among each other; in addition, they offered their portable systems of biometric data collection. The objective of both, beyond the identification of migrants, is to establish a homogeneous and systematized information exchange in order to prevent and prosecute smuggling and human trafficking;*
- *Work with carrier companies in order to prevent and prosecute smuggling and human trafficking. Establish a system like APIS with bus lines in Central America;*
- *Countries of origin were asked to establish a mayor link with their Diaspora, so that it could be the one that alerts migrants about the risks of irregular migration;*
- *There was a big concern about gaining information from the countries where these migrants access Latin America (south America), which will be addressed in the dialogue spaces within the South American Conference on Migrations, SCM, that will have place this year;*
- *Countries of origin were asked to replicate the Central America experience of joint consulates;*
- *Delegation of Mexico offered the experience of Child Protection Officers, especially for preventing and identifying human trafficking victims;*
- *To establish agreements for the return of extra-continental migrants to their country of origin or to the country they entered in a regular manner; this will also be a topic for the dialogue with the SCM;*
- *To work in a deeper and coordinated way with NGO's in order that they can aware migrants on the risks and difficulties they will find on their trip to countries of destiny. In addition, look after to migrants who can be the ones to aware from this risks and difficulties;*
- *It was expressed a big concern on what will happen with migrants that definitively couldn't been identified, and those who stay stranded in the region;*
- *A following up is going to be established in the Ad-hoc working group for this matter in the RCM.*

Finally, during the closing session the Vice-minister of Population, Migration, and Religious Affairs of Mexico, Mr Gustavo Mohar, expressed that while partial and incomplete solutions are available in regard to the topic of extra-continental migration flows, RCM has been able to follow-up by promoting spaces for dialogue to improve communication between all involved countries.

Furthermore, Mr Mohar highlighted that one of the primary contributions of this meeting was to involve consular officers from countries of origin of extra-continental migrants. He mentioned that while many actions still need to be implemented, the mere fact of developing a data base to exchange basic information in order to expedite consular



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones



Regional Conference on Migration
Conferencia Regional sobre Migración

notification procedures and share best practices and concerns affecting the involved countries is a great achievement.