

FROM CARTAGENA

THE CIVIL SOCIETY OF THE CONTINENT MAKES AN URGENT CALL TO ADDRESS THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS OF HAITIAN MIGRANTS AND PROTECT THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE AMERICAS

*From Cartagena, Colombia, facing the grave humanitarian and human rights situation of Haitian migrants, representatives of international, migrant, human rights, and civil society organizations call on the governments and states of the Americas **to make the HAITIAN migrant population one of the central points on the agendas of the countries of the continent.***

Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. May 26, 2017

On May 25 -26 of 2017, representatives of international cooperation organizations, universities, human rights organizations, migrant organizations and the general civil society of Haiti, the United States, Mexico, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, and Canada have convened in Cartagena to work together to draw attention to the humanitarian crisis of the Haitian migrant population in the region and make a JOINT DECLARATION urging states to address this situation.

Haitian migration in Latin America has seen an exponential rise as a result of the devastating earthquake that affected this country in January of 2010. Countries like Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, and Venezuela have been the destination countries for this new migration flow. Nowadays we consider that more than 100,000 Haitians have migrated to Latin America over the last seven years, mostly to Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador. Since more than two years ago however, Haitian migration has shifted, crossing the continent from south to north, passing through more than ten countries in order to arrive in the United States, as they search for better life opportunities.

Adding to the long and dangerous journey of the Haitian migrant population, governments have made the decision to close their borders, deport migrants, increase the obstacles for migratory legalization, limit the time allowed to stay in destination countries, impede access to basic services, and in some cases, promote openly discriminatory practices.

With this in mind, the organizations convened in Cartagena, within the framework of the International Forum on Haitian Migration in the Americas, makes a DECLARATION in which they:

1. Invoking the commitments made by world governments in the New York Declaration of 2016, propose Haiti as a country of special importance for the agenda of this worldwide pact on migrants and refugees; they consider it of great importance that

Haitian Afro-descendants be the subject of special protection in specific cases within the framework of the United Nations International Decade for Afro-descendants (2015-2024).

2. Express profound concern for the regressive politics regarding Haitian migration.
3. Remind the world that no migrant is illegal and that it is the duty of states to protect the rights of migrants.
4. Invite the new government of Haiti to take a proactive role in protecting the rights of its nationals, to support them through their consular services and to facilitate their documentation for a migration that dignifies and respects their human rights.
5. Recognize the good practices of South America in terms of the legalization, integration, and welcoming of migrants, as in the case of Brazil (which legalized the situation of more than eighty thousand Haitians). They urge the states to continue these practices, reinforce them, and promote their extension throughout the region.
6. Urgently request a greater time frame for TPS (Temporary Protected Status) in the U.S., accompanied by medium and long term solutions that do not involve deportation or NON-voluntary returns of the sixty thousand Haitian migrants in a situation of legal limbo.
7. Express their support for the peace process in Colombia and urge the Colombian government to become a regional example of a country that protects migrants and refugees.
8. Invite academia to conduct research on the history of Haiti to contribute to overcoming the stereotypes in Latin America surrounding this country, and to create scholarship and mobility programs for Haitians.
9. Exhort the media, as a priority in its information agenda, to recognize and make visible the situation of the Haitian migrant population, establishing binational and international journalistic alliances.
10. Reiterate that the international organizations in charge of the protection of the rights of Haitian migrants and refugees, are and must continue to be fundamental agents for the promotion and materialization of the rights of Haitian migrants and refugees.
11. Propose the construction of a continental legal framework, training local officials, and increasing budgets with a view towards guaranteeing the protection of Haitian migrants, considering the specific characteristics of this flow.
12. Urge the American states to expand mechanisms of articulation, cooperation, and dialogue in order to integrally and effectively address those in need of international protection; and to effectively apply international law, including the rectification and implementation of the convention on stateless people of 1954.
13. Express that states should develop laws and actions that incorporate prevention, protection, and resolution in facing the problems of nationality and documentation that configure statelessness, following through with the commitments of the Brazil Plan of Action.
14. Urge UNHCR to strengthen its offices in Latin America, especially in Haiti, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic, as well as to strengthen its dialogue with states in order to qualify its answering procedures to prevent statelessness and assist people in need of international protection, in particular refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons.

15. Express that it is essential to effectively respond to the needs of migrants of other nationalities on the continent, especially for Venezuelan and Cuban migrants, from a rights perspective, and with practices of brotherhood and solidarity.
16. Call on states to institute internal policies of integration and openness that guarantee social, economic, and cultural rights, assuring that migration is an option rather than a means for surviving exclusionary social and economic models.
17. Consider it opportune a consultative solicitation on Haiti to the Interamerican Court of Human Rights.
18. Insist that it is necessary that the Interamerican Commission of Human Rights relay the situation of Haitian migration.
19. Invite the OAS to produce a resolution to address Haitian migration.

Following the meeting in Cartagena, the organizations involved will move forward in the construction of a common agenda and a continental network in order to advocate for and follow-up on the actions of states relating to migration, from a rights-based and gender-based focus.

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