

Forum: Human Rights Commission

Issue: Measures to Control Migratory Flows in Latin America

Student Officer: Mehmet Alp Ünal

Position: Deputy Chair

Introduction

The migration crisis in the Latin American region is a non avoidable factor and measures in order to prevent unbalanced migratory flows are necessary for the prosperity of the region. When the region is observed, there is a tendency of migrating from less developed countries to more developed countries such as: economically less developed areas, areas where people are oppressed because of their thoughts, areas where discriminatory behavior because of ethnic identities or the religion they believe are common and areas ruled by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes often give migration to more developed countries where the economy is better and the climate is more liveable with a more democratic understanding of human rights and well being. It is crystal clear that in order to find a sustainable solution to the issue, cooperation in the region is necessary and countries should give emphasis on human rights when collaborating with each other. It would be better that in the case of migration, countries revise their policies and fix the loopholes that are encountered for the prosperity of refugees and asylum seekers. By this way it can be ensured that the international order will be maintained by the implementation of these fixed rules or policies and the region will be stabilized by avoiding any civil conflicts and crises that might happen in the future. If these cases are solved one of the root causes of the migratory flows will be eradicated.

Definition of Key Terms

Refugee: A person or a group of people that who is forced to leave their country because of inconvenient cases such as economic crisis, civil wars or religious purposes (Longman Dictionary)

Migrant Flow: “The number of international migrants arriving in a country (immigrants) or the number of international migrants departing from a country (emigrants) over the course of a specific period.” (IOM Key Migration Terms)

Asylum Seeker: “An individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every recognized refugee is initially an asylum seeker.” (IOM Key Migration Terms).

Regularization: Regularization provides illegal migrants that are already present in a country the right to become a legal migrant for a period of time or on a permanent basis. In the Latin American region this term is often referred to as “legalization” (IOM)

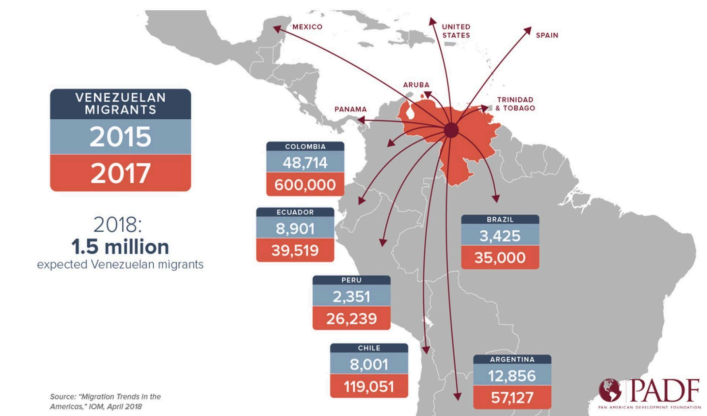
The Quito Process: The Quito Process is a managed initiative that was implemented in 2018 to maintain a common approach for the issue of the Venezuelan migrant crisis and to promote aligned policies.

Transit Migration: The migration type when the refugees or the asylum seekers pass multiple countries on their way to migration. For example the migration destination is USA and the refugee is from Latin America and he passes Darien Gap (used as a transit) to reach the destination.

General Overview

1. Causes of Migration

The topic, migratory flows in Latin America dates back to the 1980s-1990s. In these years, the civil unrest and the conflicts between the regional governments had a huge impact on the stability of the region. This shift in the power balance and civil activities resulted with massive migration waves from the Latin American countries. Beside the civil unrest that was unfortunately popular during the time, another hardship for the issue was climate challenges. Between the years 1998 and 2001 severe natural disasters such as Hurricane Mitch and earthquakes worsened the migration crisis and increased the level of migration in countries such as: Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras. Also economical factors such as hyperinflation and economic collapse were effective sides that



(Image 1: Migration rates of Venezuela and the migrated places)

caused increased migration from the region. For example, Venezuelan economy and civil rights are limited and the political power mostly deviates from a democratic style and leans on the authoritarian side resulting with a consequence that can be seen in the image provided. All in all, specifically, in the Latin American region in general, most of the migratory flows are caused by breach of human rights, violence and vulnerable crime prevention systems, economic challenges and nature related factors such as natural disasters.

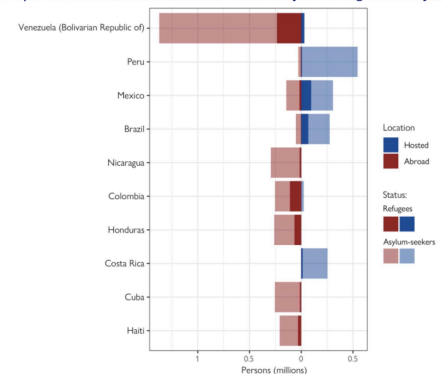
2. Migration Concepts and Routes

After the reasons for the migratory flows are discussed it would be better to proceed with the concept of transit migration and the routes that are used by the migrants. A preferred concept to migrate is migration to the northern side, where the goal is to migrate to northern countries such as the USA. Darièn Gap which is located between the borders of Panama and Columbia is a way to achieve this concept, often referred to as a dangerous route to migrate. Another concept of migration is migration within the particular region (migration within the surrounding countries). In the case of Venezuelan migration, it was recorded that neighbors and governments that are in the same region with Venezuela received migration which is an example of this concept. Another method used by migrants is to head towards the south and seek asylum in countries such as Argentina and Brazil seeking improved life conditions. Another important point about this section and aforementioned section is that economic failure can both be the cause of migration and can become as a result of increased migration. It is important for the governments to keep in mind that allowing weak policies in human rights and economical factors will increase the emigration rate which will later worsen the economical issue they are in and make accessibility to civil rights harder. There are several measures that are taken and are being implemented and they are listed below. However, with utmost vitality, regional governments should consider the issue as a common weakness and take measures by collaboration and reviewing their weak sides to change the crisis into an opportunity.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Venezuela: The overwhelming economic conditions and the hyperinflation brought the situation worse. It was recorded that the emigration rate of Venezuela is 8.162 (decimal) per 1000 people which means approximately 1% of the population emigrated from their home to other countries (macro trends). There were accusations that the Maduro government was responsible for some of the emigrations because of the totalitarian regime. The Americas region received many immigration from Venezuela. The data is more understandable when the graph is observed.

Figure 15. Top 10 Latin American and Caribbean countries by total refugees and asylum-seekers, 2022



(Image 2 : Distribution of refugees and Asylum seekers)

El Salvador: Similar to Venezuela and the other countries, El Salvador is also another country with high immigration rates with a value of -7.7 migrants/1000 (migration policy, CIA). El Salvador has a dense population due to its land area. Reasons such as unstable economy, vulnerability to natural disasters and civil violence can be listed as but not limited to factors that worsen the migration crisis in the country.

Panama: Darièn Gap is a migration route between the borders of Panama and Columbia. The Panamanian government reported that more than 520 thousand people were aiming to go to the USA by passing Darièn Gap . Most of these people were Latin American and some recorded to come from

Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan (CFR, Roy).

Colombia: It was recorded that Colombia granted legal status to around 1.7 million Venezuelan migrants (Turkewitz), this act was described as a humanitarian and a historic event and Colombia got the commendations of the region for performing such a humanitarian act.


USA: Similar to measures such as the Los Angeles Declaration, the USA is a vital country in this issue. The USA works hard for the issue of migration and prevention of forced displacement. It was reported that “Over the last two years, the 22 endorsing countries have achieved substantial progress across the Los Angeles Declaration’s three core pillars: addressing root causes and supporting the integration of migrants to foster long-term stabilization; expanding lawful pathways for migration and protection; and strengthening humane enforcement.”(Panama,US Embassy in Panama) In this statement done by the US embassy in Panama it can be understood that the USA assists other nations to develop their migration policies.

IOM: Refer to the UN involvement section of this report

UNHCR: Refer to the UN involvement section of this report

Timeline of Events

<p>14 December 1950</p>	<p>The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established aiming for the prosperity of the refugees and being an organization to tackle the problems refugees face (UN).</p>
<p>1980s-1990s</p>	<p>The conflicts in the Latin American region caused masses of people to migrate. This migrations were caused by the civil wars (<i>Research Guides and Class Pages</i>)</p>
<p>22 November 1984</p>	<p>The Cartagena Declaration on Refugees stresses the vitality of international protection of refugees worldwide. Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama, Cartagena de Indias,</p>

	Colombia are focused (UNHCR).
1998-2001	Hurricane Mitch and earthquakes in the region worsened the issue, and increased the level of migration from Latin American region countries such as: El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras to other countries (<i>Research Guides and Class Pages</i>)
September 3-4 2018	The Quito Process was taken into consideration. Quito Process is made up of 13 countries in the region to tackle the issue of the refugee crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.
June 2022	The Los Angeles declaration was adopted aiming for secure migration and refugee protection. The main topics promoted were protection of human rights of the refugees (Carnegie).
2023	 <p>(Image 3: Darién Gap located on Colombia Panama border)</p> <p>The Panamanian government reported that more than 520 thousand people were aiming to go to the USA by passing Darién Gap . Most of these people were Latin American and some recorded to come from Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan (CFR, Roy).</p>

UN Involvement

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR, is a vital organ when the case is handling refugee crisis and asylum seekers. As an organization that was formed on 14 December 1950, UNHCR has been performing many impactful jobs. On 6th of March 2025, it was reported that around 50 thousand refugees and asylum seekers were integrated into the community increasing people's stability and well-being. Additionally, in the press release that dates to 12 December 2024, it was seen that Chilean declaration about refugee protection and asylum seekers, climate-related solutions were another point that was focused which generally aligns with 2018 Global Compact on Refugees. Lastly, in another press release it was stated that Since 2019, more than 4.5 Venezuelan migrants have been in a more stabilized condition in 17 countries. The future 2025-2026 plan is to make an investment amount of 1.4 billion \$ that will be used in asylum and refugee support. (UNHCR)

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

On 10th of June 2022, IOM, welcomed the adoption of the Los Angeles declaration decided at the Summit of the Americas. This action is considered as a step to prevent the refugee crisis present in the Latin American continent. The key point was collaboration between the countries in order to take robust measures. Also IOM addressed the root causes of migration which can be listed as economic instability, climate hardships etc. Also IOM publishes annual impact reports. Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Member States and stakeholders have the chance to assess their progress in implementing the objectives and tenets of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration during the 2024 Regional Review.(IOM)

United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

ECLAC is another crucial body when the case is UN involvement in the issue. ECLAC aims to tackle the issue first hand. In the report published CEPAL review No 141, it is stated that ECLAC recognizes the migration in the region as a complex and a growing issue. Additionally, it was stated that irregular migration exposed people to xenophobia and discrimination. In the report, ECLAC's purpose is to promote human rights while protecting refugees and asylum seekers.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF is another UN organization that deals with protection of children that are affected by the refugee crisis among the world and Latin American countries in this issue. UNICEF publicized that migrant girls and adolescents suffer from the risks such as trafficking, gender-based violence and severe human right breaches. It was recorded that %20 of the total migrants were the mentioned females. To prevent this suffering, necessary immediate measures should be taken. (UNICEF)

Relevant UN Documents

New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (19 September 2016, A/RES/71/1)

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (19 December 2018, A/RES/73/195)

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly (17 December 2018, A/RES/73/151)

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (18 December 1990, A/RES/45/158)

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on the topic Protection of migrants (16 December 2021, A/RES/76/172)

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly (15 December 2022, A/RES/77/196)

Treaties and Events

22 November 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees:

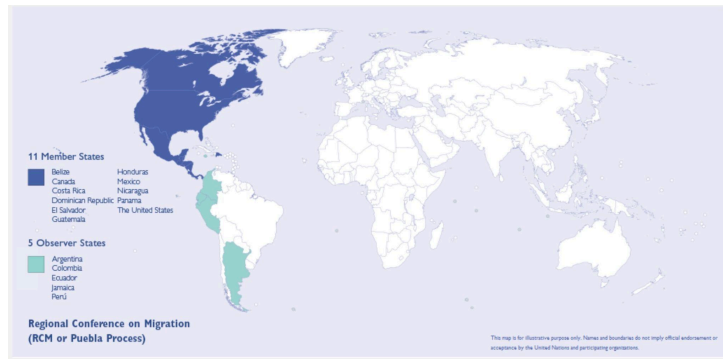
The Cartagena Declaration on Refugees stresses the vitality of international protection of refugees worldwide. Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama, Cartagena de Indias, Colombia are focused. Furthermore the declaration was beneficial in shaping the general approach to refugee policies in the region and expanded the definition to the term “refugee” (UNHCR).

16 November 2004 Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action to Strengthen the International Protection of Refugees in Latin America: Similarly, the main goal in the aforementioned declaration is once again protection of refugees in the Latin American region by abiding to the international human rights and the refugee laws. It was stated that collaboration among the region is vital for a solution. There is a call for improved frameworks and solidarity was promoted.

2022 Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection:

Thanks to this declaration, Asylum Action Package Committee (APC) was created by Canada having a leader position in the organization. Asylum systems were evaluated by mapping techniques and by case studies.

1996 Regional Conference On Migration (RCM Or Puebla Process):



(Image 4: Member States and Observer States on Puebla Process)

“The RCM is a Regional Consultative Process (RCP), that is voluntary, non-binding and operates by consensus. It provides a space for respectful, frank and honest discussions among Member Countries on regional and international migration, ensuring greater coordination, transparency, and cooperation.” (IOM). As the quotation suggests, participation is totally optional and voluntary. However one key point that should be observed, is Venezuela not being a member or an observer in this initiative beside having vulnerable statistics.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Generally, when the previous attempts are observed the common challenges can be listed as but not limited to: inconsistent implementation in the region and non-collaborative approach, financial challenges such as funding of the measures that are planned to be implemented and deviation from tackling the root causes of the issue. The issue is majorly related to human rights; so measures that aim equality among people, and prevent discrimination should be further focused by supporting the possible plans with a robust and feasible economic infrastructure. Coordination is key and regional well being should be targeted.

Possible Solutions

In the resolutions that the delegates write, it is vital that the recommendations cover the root causes of the issue. Some of the root causes of migratory flows can be listed as but not limited to: economic instability, wars, civil wars or unstable ideological or religious shifts. To prevent economic crisis and instability, strong fiscal policies and currency policies should be handled. Some Latin American countries are devastated by the effects of hyperinflation and economic crisis and these factors have a huge impact on migratory flows. Another significant point is wars and civil wars that cause unrest in the region. Actions between 1980-1990s in the region is a robust example of this dire cause. Precautions that aim to prevent any civil unrest and possible wars are essential to keep in mind. Increasing collaboration and handling an organized, common approach to the issue. Also counter measures to prevent discrimination of groups and to prevent xenophobia are needed to prevent any unstable ideological shift and to promote more political stability. Delegates should be very careful

while writing the aforementioned points and mentioning them because these topics might seem off-topic when compared with the agenda item, however as can be learned from the past these points can cause huge masses of people to migrate. Methods like digitization can be another approach that can be searched. Promotion of human rights is another point that should be touched upon in the HRC as a committee and the issue particularly. Forming legal and safe migration pathways with the protection of human rights and gender equality is another possible solution. Lastly, people's awareness should be raised upon this issue. It should be known that refugee and asylum-seeking activities are not only related to the Latin American countries but all the member states. Strengthening regulations, worldwide collaboration and states' revising their legislations can be ways to solve the issue. But with great awareness delegates should keep in mind that nobody can interfere with other countries' internal affairs and that will be considered as a breach of sovereignty. Therefore no state can force other states to revise their national legislations. The delegates are welcome to come with innovative ideas and sensible solutions that are not listed here but can be a solution for the issue.

Notes from the Chair

Useful Links:

<https://publications.iadb.org/en/migration-policy-regimes-latin-america-and-caribbean-immigration-regional-free-movement-refuge-and>

<https://nypost.com/2024/12/25/us-news/migrants-traversing-darien-gap-plummets-40-as-panama-cracks-down-on-major-route/>

<https://www.undp.org/latin-america/better-world-migrants-latin-america-and-caribbean>

<https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/latin-america-and-caribbean-develop-regional-labour-migration-strategy>

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/>

Bibliography

"73/195. Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration." *United Nations*, UN, 11 Jan. 2019, www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/IA_RES_73_195.pdf.

Acosta, Diego, and Jeremy Harris. "Migration Policy Regimes in Latin America and the Caribbean Immigration, Regional Free Movement, Refuge, and Nationality." *IDB*, July 2022, publications.iadb.org/en/migration-policy-regimes-latin-america-and-caribbean-immigration-re

gional-free-movement-refuge-and.

Cecchini, Simone, and Jorge Martínez Pizarro. "International Migration in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Development and Rights Perspective." *CEPAL Review No. 141*, repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/4124169a-d6db-4a62-9280-34517e2c8a57/content.

Gandini, Luciana, and Andrew Selee. "Betting on Legality Latin American and Caribbean Responses to the Venezuelan Displacement Crisis." *Migration Policy Institute*, May 2023, www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/mpi-venezuelans-legal-status-2023_eng_final.pdf.

Immigration, Refugees Immigration, Réfugiés and Citizenship Canada et Citoyenneté Canada. "Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection Investing in Asylum Action Package Committee (APC) Summary of Mapping Exercise." *Immigration, Refugees Immigration, Réfugiés and Citizenship Canada Et Citoyenneté Canada*, losangelesdeclaration.com/sites/default/files/2025-01/Mapping%20Exercise%20-%20Summary%20of%20Results%20and%20List%20of%20Needs%20Identified_.pdf.

International Organization for Migration. "Key Migration Terms | International Organization for Migration." *International Organization for Migration*, www.iom.int/key-migration-terms.

---. "Latin America and the Caribbean." *World Migration Report*, worldmigrationreport.iom.int/what-we-do/world-migration-report-2024-chapter-3/latin-america-and-caribbean.

---. "Regional Conference on Migration (RCM or Puebla Process) | International Organization for Migration." *International Organization for Migration*, www.iom.int/regional-conference-migration-rcm-or-puebla-process.

"IOM Statement on the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection." *ONU Migración Americas*, 10 June 2022, lac.iom.int/en/node/121666.

IV. Quito Process | *Innova[Migra]ción*.

innovamigracion.iom.int/en/comunicacion/caja-de-herramientas/marcos/proceso-quito#:~:text=The%20Quito%20process%20emerged%20as,international%20financial%20and%20institutional%20cooperation.

MACROTRENDS. "Venezuela Net Migration Rate 1950-2025." *MACROTRENDS*, 28 Feb. 2025,

www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/VEN/venezuela/net-migration#:~:text=The%20net%20migration%20rate%20for,a%20274.33%25%20decline%20from%202021.

“Migration Governance Indicators Data on the Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration in Latin America and the Caribbean.” *IOM Publications Platform*, publications.iom.int/books/migration-governance-indicators-data-implementation-global-compact-migration-latin-america.

Migration Policy Institute. “El Salvador.” *Migration Policy Institute*, www.migrationpolicy.org/country-resource/el-salvador.

Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations - Office of the Historian. history.state.gov/milestones/1981-1988/central-america.

OAS. “Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action to Strengthen the International Protection of Refugees in Latin America Mexico City, 16 November 2004.” OAS, 16 Nov. 2004, www.oas.org/dil/mexico_declaration_plan_of_action_16nov2004.pdf.

Osorio, Alexandra Winkler. “How The Diaspora Is Helping Venezuela’s Migration Crisis.” *World Economic Forum*, 14 Jan. 2019, www.weforum.org/stories/2019/01/how-the-diaspora-is-helping-venezuela-migration-crisis.

Panama, U. S. Mission. “Fact Sheet: Fourth Ministerial Meeting on the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection - U.S. Embassy in Panama.” *U.S. Embassy in Panama*, 30 Sept. 2024, pa.usembassy.gov/fact-sheet-fourth-ministerial-meeting-on-the-los-angeles-declaration-on-migration-and-protection/#:~:text=On%20June%2010%2C%202022%2C%20President,of%20migration%20and%20forced%20displacement.

Papadopoulou, Aspasia and Global Commission on International Migration. “Regularization programmes: an effective instrument of migration policy?” *Global Commission on International Migration*, May 2005, www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl2616/files/2018-07/gmp33.pdf#:~:text=Definition,a%20permanent%20or%20temporary%20basis.

regularize | meaning of regularize in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English | LDOCE. www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/regularize.

Research Guides and Class Pages: Central American Refugee Crisis: Home.

research.dom.edu/centralamericanrefugeecrisis.

Roy, Diana. "Crossing the Darién Gap: Migrants Risk Death on the Journey to the U.S." *Council on Foreign Relations*, 22 July 2024,

www.cfr.org/article/crossing-darien-gap-migrants-risk-death-journey-us#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Panamanian%20government,people%20annually%20a%20decade%20ago.

Technical Difficulties.

[www.state.gov/announcement-of-a-visa-restriction-policy-targeting-foreign-officials-and-others-facilitating-illegal-migration-into-the-united-states.](https://www.state.gov/announcement-of-a-visa-restriction-policy-targeting-foreign-officials-and-others-facilitating-illegal-migration-into-the-united-states)

Turkewitz, Julie. "Colombia Makes 'Historic' Decision to Grant Legal Status to 1.7 Million Venezuelan Migrants." *The New York Times*, 8 Feb. 2021,

[www.nytimes.com/2021/02/08/world/americas/colombia-venezuela-migrants-duque.html.](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/08/world/americas/colombia-venezuela-migrants-duque.html)

{"@type": "Person", "name": "Katie Tobin"}. "The Los Angeles Declaration Continues to Shape the Regional and Global Migration Response." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*,

[carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/09/americas-migration-los-angeles-declaration-north-south?lang=en.](https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/09/americas-migration-los-angeles-declaration-north-south?lang=en)

UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency. "A New Strategy to Support Stabilization and Integration of Refugees and Migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean." *UNHCR*, 6 Dec. 2024,

[www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/new-strategy-support-stabilization-and-integration-refugees-and-migrants-latin.](https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/new-strategy-support-stabilization-and-integration-refugees-and-migrants-latin)

---. "Cartagena+40: The Chile Declaration and Plan of Action Consolidate Regional Leadership in the Protection of Refugees, Displaced and Stateless People." *UNHCR*, 12 Dec. 2024,

[www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/cartagena-40-chile-declaration-and-plan-action-consolidate-regional-leadership.](https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/cartagena-40-chile-declaration-and-plan-action-consolidate-regional-leadership)

---. "Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, Adopted by the Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama, Cartagena De Indias, Colombia, 22

November 1984 | UNHCR." *UNHCR*,

[www.unhcr.org/media/cartagena-declaration-refugees-adopted-colloquium-international-protection-refugees-central.](https://www.unhcr.org/media/cartagena-declaration-refugees-adopted-colloquium-international-protection-refugees-central)

---. "Mexico Marks a Milestone: 50,000 Refugees and Asylum-seekers Find Stability and Rebuild Their Lives." *UNHCR*, 6 Mar. 2025,

www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/mexico-marks-milestone-50-000-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-find-stability-and.

UNICEF. "Migration and Gender." *UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean*, 3BC,
www.unicef.org/lac/en/migration-and-gender.

UNSW Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law. *The 1967 Protocol*. June 2023,
www.unsw.edu.au/content/dam/pdfs/unsw-adobe-websites/kaldor-centre/2023-09-factsheet/2023-09-Factsheet_1967_Protocol_Jun2023_1.pdf.