

UNHCR and IOM Welcome Colombia's Decision to Regularize Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants

IOM-UNHCR Joint Press Release

Bogota/Geneva – UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency and IOM, the International Organization for Migration, today praised Colombia's initiative to provide ten-year temporary protection status to Venezuelans in the country.

Colombia is host to 1.7 million Venezuelans, which represent more than 37 per cent of the estimated 4.6 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean. More than half of the Venezuelan population in Colombia lack regular status, affecting their ability to access essential services, protection and assistance.

"This bold humanitarian gesture serves as an example for the region and the rest of the world. It is a life-changing gesture for the 1.7 million displaced Venezuelans who will now benefit from added protection, security and stability while they are away from home," said UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi who is currently in Colombia, assessing humanitarian needs.

"We applaud Colombia for its extraordinary generosity and its commitment to ensure protection for displaced Venezuelans. This decision serves as a model of pragmatism and humanity."

With the COVID-19 pandemic compounding needs throughout the region, many Venezuelan refugees and migrants, as well as local communities, struggle to survive as they face worsening poverty, job losses, evictions, hunger, and a lack of food and access to medical treatment.

The Temporary Protection Status will also provide access to basic services including the national health system and COVID-19 vaccination plans. Regularization is also key to long-term solutions, including access to the job market, which in turn serves to lessen the dependency of people on humanitarian assistance while also contributing to the country's post COVID-19 socio-economic recovery.

"The regularization of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Colombia through the provision of a generous temporary protection status is a key to facilitating their socio-economic integration and access to the national health system and COVID-19 vaccination campaigns," said IOM Director General António Vitorino.

"The Government of Colombia has once again shown both great solidarity and leadership. Its decision serves as an example to the world."

The implementation of such a large-scale initiative will require a significant investment in time, logistics and resources. IOM and UNHCR, as co-leaders of the Regional Inter-agency

Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V), and in coordination with their 159 partners, stand ready to contribute with their technical expertise, field presence, logistical capacity and resources to support the roll-out of this important initiative.

Reiterating the need for solidarity and support to Colombia and other refugee and migrant-hosting countries, IOM and UNHCR call on the international community to keep providing adequate and timely funding to ensure the success of this breakthrough commitment.

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