

Conference on Migration Control for the Americas

U.S., Canada pledge to suppress immigration critics

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Editorial Note by Wayne Lutton:

Earlier this year, representatives of the United States and Canada pledged to work against the demands of their own citizens for immigration restrictions and controls. In a joint statement, reprinted here, the United States, Canada, and eight Latin American nations agreed to "counteract anti-immigrant attitudes."

Once again, the U.S. government is deliberately acting against the express wishes of the overwhelming majority of the American people. As most readers of this journal are well aware, public opinion polls have long confirmed that a majority of Americans are opposed to the sort of immigration policies we have had in effect since 1965. As we approach the end of the Twentieth Century, we see that the US government is no longer the embodiment of the "general will" of its own citizens.

An intergovernmental conference on international

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migration attended by representatives of Northern and Central American countries was held at Puebla, Mexico, on 13 and 14 March 1996. The Conference, which was organized by the Government of Mexico, was the first inter-governmental meeting on the topic and was attended by representatives of the 10 countries in the region: Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States of America. Representatives of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Population Division of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis of the United Nations Secretariat, and the United Nations Population Fund also attended. The Conference was preceded by a two-day technical meeting during which the contents of a joint communique were negotiated. The text of the joint communique, which was adopted by the Conference, is reproduced below.

During the Conference, representatives of Northern and Central American countries made statements on their national experience with international migration. In addition, representatives of international organizations reviewed the levels and trends of international migration in the region; discussed the interrelations of international

migration and development; outlined the policy responses of Governments; and provided an overview of the problems related to the trafficking of migrants.

As the joint communique below indicates, the countries represented committed themselves to safeguarding the human rights of migrants; combating trafficking in migrants, especially by establishing such trafficking as a criminal offense; and collaborating in various ways to enhance the control of migration. The conference was viewed as a successful first step toward increased regional cooperation on issues related to international migration; a follow-up meeting was scheduled in Panama for early 1997.

Joint communique issued at Puebla, Mexico on 14 March 1996

A regional Conference on migration was held on 13 and 14 March 1996 in Puebla, Mexico, with the participation of the Governments of Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States of America. After a useful and productive dialogue, the participating Governments issued the following joint communique:

The Governments recognized that the origins, manifestations and effects of migration, including refugee movements, are important issues on the agenda of the international community. By and large, migration is beneficial and has potential advantages, both for the countries of origin and for the countries of destination; however, in order for these benefits to be realized, migration must be orderly. Migration is a complex historical phenomenon. In recent years, there has been an increase in large migratory flows due, in part, to asymmetries between different economies and labour markets, and

migration in the region would contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon, help counteract anti-immigrant attitudes and strengthen relations between participating States.

They also recognized the need to promote regional cooperation in order to attenuate the structural factors that give rise to migration in the region, without detriment to the bilateral cooperation programs.

The Governments recognized the sovereign right and legitimate interest of each country to safeguard its boundaries and enforce its own immigration laws, always observing strict respect for the human rights of the migrants, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and other relevant international instruments, irrespective of their nationality, race, age, religion, sex or immigration status.

social development of the region by encouraging trade and productive investment and by implementing economic and social policies as factors that, along with international cooperation, can help address some of the causes of migration;

4. Recognize that migration can make a positive economic and cultural contribution both to countries of origin and to countries of destination;

5. Condemn violations of the human rights of migrants and others, irrespective of their immigration status, and to strive to eliminate such violations. Particular attention will be given to the special needs of women and children, including their protection when appropriate;

6. Enhance public awareness of the human rights of migrants as a way of promoting respect for their dignity, counteracting anti-immigrant attitudes and eradicating illegal acts targeting immigrants;

7. Promote national cooperation and other forms of cooperation in order to establish programs that will help meet the basic needs of undocumented migrants who are in the custody of immigration authorities in each country pending the determination of their immigration status;

8. Recognize and encourage the work of non-governmental organizations that develop programs of assistance for migrants, as a supplement to government efforts in this area;

9. Encourage States of the region, in particular those with common borders, to promote consultation mechanisms on immigration matters and protection of the human rights of migrants, with the participation of

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also due to political and social factors, natural disasters, environmental degradation, rapid population growth, and trade and investment barriers, as well as civil conflicts. The Governments therefore drew attention to the need for mutual cooperation in order to promote economic growth and employment in order to reduce poverty.

The Governments also recognized that each country perceives the causes, dimensions and consequences of migration in its own way. They agreed that a comprehensive, objective and long-term approach to the origins, manifestations and effects of

The participating Governments agree to:

1. Expedite the development and adoption of a comprehensive, objective and long-term approach to the regional phenomenon of migration in order to address both its causes and its manifestations in an effective manner;

2. Promote a better understanding of the regional and international phenomenon of migration through specialized studies that will identify and contribute to the implementation of measures to resolve the issues that prompt migration and that derive from it;

3. Promote the economic and

		<p>organizations of traffickers operating in the region;</p> <p>16. Promote better understanding, in order to raise society's awareness, of the harmful effects of migrant trafficking, by condemning the human degradation, indignities and abuses associated with this activity, through public information programs, as a means, among others, of helping to identify and implement measures designed to reduce and resolve the problems deriving therefrom;</p> <p>17. Expand regional cooperation in the field of technical assistance and training so as to refine national systems for the investigation, handling of evidence and prosecution of traffickers in migrants;</p>
<p>concerned authorities at various levels of government, law-enforcement officials, and consular and diplomatic representatives of the countries of the region;</p> <p>10. Promote in appropriate forums the exchange of information and experience regarding immigration labour issues;</p> <p>11. Consider and, where appropriate, encourage consultations prior to the adoption of immigration measures that may affect countries in the region, particularly States with common borders, with full respect for the sovereignty of each State;</p> <p>12. Establish an exchange of immigration legislation and procedures as a resource for use by countries of the region in analyzing, reviewing and improving immigration laws and procedures;</p> <p>13. Affirm the importance of taking</p>	<p>steps to facilitate documented migration;</p> <p>14. With full respect for the national sovereignty and territorial jurisdiction of each country, and within the context of juridical arrangements established with other States, coordinate efforts to combat criminal organizations engaged in migrant trafficking. To that end, the Governments undertake to exchange timely information so as to give countries of the region a chance to adopt appropriate measures to combat networks and connections of migrant traffickers; and to exchange additional data to prevent the operations of and help to detect such criminal organizations;</p> <p>15. Encourage the characterization, in the national legislation of States that have not done so, of trafficking in migrants as a criminal offense in order to help eradicate the</p>	<p>18. Encourage the exchange of experience regarding the phenomenon of migration in appropriate multilateral forums and, where appropriate, encourage further consultations with relevant international agencies;</p> <p>19. Hold periodic consultations between countries of the region in order to advance cooperation on specific issues relating to migration. To that end, inter alia, sponsor meetings of immigration officials, using the experience of the work done by the Central American Commission for Migration and other regional coordination bodies;</p> <p>20. Promote the exchange of information and regional cooperation directed to technical assistance and human resources training in order to control the flow of undocumented migrants from outside the region;</p>

21. Advance more effective mechanisms to combat the falsification and adulteration of immigration documents.

The Governments expressed satisfaction at the positive spirit of cooperation that characterized the debates. Participating delegations also thanked the Government of Mexico for organizing the Conference and recognized the need to continue the constructive dialogue on that important issue in order to strengthen regional cooperation on migration. Accordingly, the Governments decided to hold a technical-level meeting in Mexico in the third quarter of 1996 in order to follow up and give effect to the agreements reached at the conference. It was also decided to hold another meeting, at the political level, in Panama City, in the first few months of 1997, and to consider the possibility of inviting some South American States to that meeting as observers. To that end, the Government of Panama is expected to request logistical support from IOM.