



# VII Annual Meeting MIRPS 2024



Best Western Belize  
Biltmore Plaza,  
Belize City



Thursday,  
5 December



## VII MIRPS Annual Meeting Final Report

### Opening remarks

**Master of ceremonies:** Ms. Tanya Santos, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Immigration of Belize

### Belize, MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidency

*Hon. John Briceño, Prime Minister of Belize and Minister of Immigration*

Prime Minister Briceño highlighted Belize's tradition as host country for displaced populations and how welcoming these persons has enriched Belize in many ways. As the 2024 MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidency, Belize played a pivotal role in advancing regional collaboration to address the challenges of forced displacement in Central America and Mexico. Belize's leadership has been marked by significant achievements that underscore its commitment to protecting and empowering displaced populations.

Building on the San Pedro Sula Declaration of 2017 and the pledges made at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, Belize spearheaded the development and implementation of the 2024 Regional Action Plan. This plan, approved by all MIRPS Member States, translated political commitments into actionable workplans and meaningful activities, strengthening the protection and solutions framework across the region. These efforts also advanced the implementation of National Action Plans, showcasing the power of regional cooperation in driving impactful results.

A key focus of Belize's presidency has been enhancing monitoring and evaluation capacities to ensure the effectiveness of MIRPS initiatives. Belize introduced mid-year MIRPS reports, thematic newsletters, and a regional communications plan, alongside a comprehensive revision of MIRPS

indicators and results frameworks. These measures have improved planning, monitoring, and the dissemination of information on progress.

Belize also prioritized strengthening synergies with regional mechanisms, such as the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection, the Regional Conference on Migration, and the Cartagena+40 Process. These forms of collaboration addressed critical challenges, including mixed movements, enhanced asylum processing, and bolstered local protection mechanisms. Belize's leadership emphasized a whole-of-society approach, fostering partnerships with academia, private sector actors, and refugee-led organizations.

As its presidency concludes, Belize leaves a legacy of tangible progress, regional solidarity, and a strengthened commitment to the MIRPS vision of protecting and empowering displaced persons.

### **Organization of American States (OAS)**

*H.E. Nestor Mendez, Assistant Secretary General (ASG)*

ASG Mendez addressed the VII MIRPS Annual Meeting, noting that his participation was particularly significant to him as Belize is his home country. He highlighted that the meeting represented the values of resilience and solidarity, which align with the efforts of MIRPS countries in addressing protection and durable solutions for displaced populations in Central America and Mexico. OAS expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Briceño and the authorities of Belize for hosting the event, emphasizing that the meeting provided an opportunity for reflection on the progress, challenges, and collaboration necessary to address forced displacement.

ASG Mendez acknowledged the immense challenges posed by the displacement crisis, with over 2.4 million people displaced in and from Central America and Mexico, who have been affected by violence, insecurity, climate change, and socio-economic factors. He stressed that these challenges represent real people—families, women, men, and children. Despite adversity, the seven MIRPS States have demonstrated remarkable solidarity and leadership. Under Belize's Pro-tempore Presidency, significant progress was made, including the strengthening of the MIRPS Regional Technical Teams and fruitful collaboration with other forums, such as with the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection and the Cartagena+40 Process.

ASG Mendez concluded his intervention by reflecting on the impact of the MIRPS, emphasizing the role of the OAS in supporting regional responses and strengthening partnerships. He highlighted the MIRPS Fund, which has supported tangible projects benefiting displaced persons, and encouraged further contributions to expand these efforts. He also expressed confidence in Costa Rica, the next Pro-tempore Presidency, to continue the progress made under Belize's leadership. Finally, he commended the adoption of the MIRPS Belize City Declaration, reaffirming the commitment to strengthen the regional response to forced displacement and setting the stage for future collaborations.

## **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

*H.E. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*

The High Commissioner expressed gratitude to the Government of Belize for its leadership in human mobility issues in the region, not only for MIRPS, but also for the Regional Conference on Migration. As the region continues to witness conflict, violence, natural disasters, and abuses forcing million to flee their homes and doing so using the same routes and means as migrants, regional cooperation is as critical as ever. Belize's role in multiple regional efforts, alongside the future leadership of Costa Rica, presents opportunities for streamlined responses to common challenges.

Responses to mixed movements must address the diverse needs of those seeking safety, ensuring their human rights are respected. Despite the complexity of these challenges, we must reject the "narrative of impossibility," as existing challenges are not beyond the reach of practical and legal solutions. Highlighting that the Americas is host to one-fifth of the world's displaced persons, UNHCR called for increased collaboration among MIRPS States, along with international organizations, development actors, civil society, academia, the private sector, local municipalities, and, not least, refugees, internally displaced, and stateless people themselves.

In the last seven years, the MIRPS has remained a strong space for solidarity in action and pragmatic implementation of innovative protection and solution initiatives, both at the national and regional levels, aligned with the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Cartagena Declaration. As Latin American countries mark the 40th anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration, the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action will further strengthen regional cooperation. UNHCR reiterated its commitment to supporting States in strengthening systems and legal frameworks, as well as finding innovative options for inclusion.

The importance of promoting the inclusion of displaced people in national systems, benefiting both refugees and host communities, was underscored, as well as the critical linkages with development efforts and tackling the root causes of displacement. UNHCR expressed gratitude for the critical contributions of MIRPS Support Platform members and urged the international community to increase investment and support, emphasizing the need to empower refugees and displaced people for a better future.

Following the opening remarks, a brief [video](#) was showcased, highlighting MIRPS progress in 2024.

## **Thematic Discussions**

### **Session 1: Access to protection in countries of transit and destination**

**Moderation:** *Mr. Michael Carter, Director for International Engagement and Capacity Building, Asylum Program and Policy Branch, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada*

Mr. Carter highlighted that one in every five displaced persons globally is in the Americas, each with a unique human story. Access to protection is crucial for these individuals, who face enormous difficulties and dangers during their journeys. However, there are challenges both for the displaced persons, who often encounter obstacles accessing protection in transit or destination countries, and for the nations that host them, whose systems are often under pressure.

In this unprecedented context, countries like Canada are working to provide timely and adequate protection, which requires innovative and flexible solutions.

## **Mexico**

*H.E. Ambassador Martha Zamarripa Rivas, Ambassador of Mexico to Belize*

Mexico congratulated the Government of Belize for its leadership as the MIRPS 2024 Pro-tempore Presidency and recognized its efforts in following up on commitments made at the Second Global Refugee Forum in 2023. It highlighted collaboration with other regional mechanisms and the work of Mexico's National Technical Team, jointly led by Secretary of Foreign Affairs, COMAR, and UNHCR, to strengthen refugee status determination processes through improvements in technical capacity, procedures, digitization, and national best practices. In the face of the growing number of applications for international protection, Mexico has implemented strategies such as COMAR's digital platform and inter-institutional coordination to ensure refugees' access to rights and inclusion. Mexico also emphasized community programs to promote integration, non-discrimination, peaceful coexistence, and efforts to combat racism and xenophobia. Finally, Mexico reaffirmed its commitment to the MIRPS as a pioneering international protection initiative and wished Costa Rica success as the next Pro-tempore Presidency.

## **Panama**

*H.E. Juan Francisco Borrell, Vice Minister of Government of Panama*

Panama congratulated Belize for its leadership as the MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidency and acknowledged the progress achieved with the support of the Technical Secretariat and the MIRPS Support Platform. It underscored its commitment to addressing human mobility challenges with a humanitarian approach, investing more than USD 100M in housing, food, rescue efforts, and comprehensive protection for persons crossing the Darién jungle. Panama also highlighted the importance of protecting the Darién National Park as a world heritage site, in light of the environmental impacts of human mobility. Panama has advanced its asylum system by reducing processing times, including gender as a ground for asylum claims, and issuing work permits to facilitate refugees' integration. Panama also emphasized its commitment to protecting stateless persons, with its regulation for the implementation of the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and prioritization of their social and economic inclusion. Panama reiterated its willingness to collaborate with the international community, congratulated Costa Rica as the next MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidency, and reaffirmed its commitment to the protection of refugees and migrants.

## **Reflections in Plenary**

The representative of the FAO raised a query regarding the status of work permits for migrant workers in the agricultural sector, emphasizing the importance of their inclusion to strengthen food security and agricultural markets in the region.

Mexico and Panama intervened to note that individuals who begin the process of refugee status determination can access work permits that allow them to engage in paid activities in any sector.

Meanwhile, Guatemala emphasized the importance of reflecting on how to provide more effective support to countries whose resources are being overwhelmed by the demands.

## **Session 2: National policies and practices for addressing internal displacement**

**Moderation:** *Ms. Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian, Director of the Department of Social Inclusion, Organization of American States*

Dr. Muñoz-Pogossian noted that internal displacement is one of the most complex challenges facing our societies today. During Session 2, public policies and state practices implemented to address this situation will be explored, focusing on the challenges and opportunities they present for the region.

### **Honduras**

*H.E. Angélica Álvarez, Secretary of State for Human Rights of Honduras*

The representative of Honduras highlighted the country's role as a leader in the MIRPS Regional Technical Team on Internal Displacement, alongside El Salvador and Mexico, to address relevant challenges. She emphasized the approval of the Law on Internal Forced Displacement in 2022, reflecting the Honduran Government's commitment to protecting displaced persons. The law is currently being implemented through an inclusive process involving various sectors. She also stressed the importance of exchanging experiences and collaborating with international actors such as the International Committee of the Red Cross. Honduras has also been affected by climate change and other root causes of displacement, which has led the country to improve services for displaced persons and build the largest migrant assistance center in the region. Finally, she emphasized the importance of addressing these challenges regionally, recognizing the efforts of MIRPS countries.

### **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**

*Mr. Francisco Javier Cepero, Deputy Head of the ICRC Regional Delegation for Mexico and Central America*

The ICRC representative highlighted the organization's commitment to the protection of persons who have been forcibly displaced by violence. He emphasized the humanitarian approach of the ICRC, which works to prevent family separation and support the families of displaced persons, following the principle of *non-refoulement*, and mentioned efforts to improve regulatory and protection processes for internally displaced persons, supporting authorities in creating legal frameworks at both the federal and state levels. The ICRC has also focused on restoring displaced persons' livelihoods and social integration, while stressing the importance of regional cooperation in finding durable solutions. ICRC expressed appreciation for the invitation to join the Advisory Panel of the MIRPS Regional Technical Team on Internal Displacement and reiterated its continued commitment to prevention efforts and protection of displaced persons.

### **Session 3: Durable solutions and integration of displaced persons**

**Moderation:** *Mr. Francesco Carella, Regional Labour Migration and Mobility Specialist, International Labor Organization (ILO)*

The ILO representative reiterated the fundamental importance of inclusion, based on two considerations. First, displaced persons should be empowered through decent work, which will allow them to be self-sufficient and contribute to the development of the host countries, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, protection encompasses not only international legal frameworks such as the Geneva Convention and the Cartagena Declaration but also the protection of human and labor rights, which are vital for displaced persons. ILO also recognized the excellent work of the Regional Technical Team on Jobs and Livelihoods, led by Costa Rica under Belize's presidency, which focuses on labor market integration, access to decent work, social security, financial services, and the recognition and certification of skills.

#### **El Salvador**

*H.E. Cindy Portal, Vice Minister of Diaspora and Human Mobility of El Salvador*

The representative of El Salvador highlighted the positive impact of the security policies implemented under President Bukele's leadership, which have allowed many displaced persons to return to their communities. The country has begun a transformation process centered on security, opportunity generation, and social cohesion. She emphasized the importance of a comprehensive approach to address displacement, meeting both immediate needs and promoting long-term solutions. El Salvador has worked within the framework of the MIRPS to strengthen protection mechanisms and solutions for displaced populations, ensuring timely assistance for victims of violence. Programs such as "Mi Primer Trabajo" and the "Oportunidades" platform have provided labor training and access to formal employment for displaced persons. Additionally, Urban Wellness and Opportunity Centers, known as "CUBOS," aim to rebuild the social fabric through arts, culture, and sports. El Salvador reiterated its commitment to advancing the protection of displaced populations, focusing on shared responsibility and human rights.

#### **Belize**

*Mr. Nikolai Zelaya, Director, Refugees Department, Ministry of Immigration of Belize*

The representative of Belize highlighted the importance of the integration of forcibly displaced persons, emphasizing the benefits that these individuals bring to host communities. Belize's Amnesty Program, launched in 2021, has allowed asylum-seekers and migrants in an irregular situation to apply for permanent residency status, guaranteeing access to education, employment, healthcare, and protection. This program also offers a pathway to Belizean citizenship. The representative also discussed the National Action Plan for 2024-2026, focusing on the inclusion of forcibly displaced persons within Belize's systems and initiatives, including professional training, business development support, and partnerships with local governments and civil society organizations, with the overarching goal to promote economic integration and self-sufficiency. As the Regional Technical Coordinator for the 2024 MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidency, he took the opportunity to thank everyone for their participation and support throughout the year, stating that

listening to all interventions in plenary sessions, Regional Technical Team meetings, conferences, and during this meeting was truly inspiring. Belize reaffirmed its commitment to continue working with partners to offer solutions and opportunities for forcibly displaced persons in the coming year.

## **Costa Rica**

*Mr. Jean Paul San Lee, Acting Director of the General Directorate of Migration and Foreigners of Costa Rica*

Costa Rica has implemented concrete measures to ensure the integration of displaced persons seeking international protection, promoting their self-sufficiency and reducing dependence on humanitarian aid. Regarding labor integration, Costa Rica implements the National Employability Strategy for Migrants, Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Costa Rica, with the support of the European Union and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation. This initiative promotes comprehensive solutions for the refugee, asylum-seeker and migrant population, facilitating access to employment through labor intermediation, achieving the registration of more than 500 refugees in digital job search platforms and participation in job fairs in 2024, in coordination with the private sector and civil society organizations. It also ensures free access to public services, including education, and promotes early integration, particularly for children, into society. As the lead country of the Regional Technical Team on Jobs and Livelihoods, Costa Rica has worked in collaboration with the ILO and other international actors to strengthen labor policies that facilitate displaced persons' integration into the labor market, recognizing their previous skills and promoting access to financial and social services.

## **Guatemala**

*Ms. Fabiola Mazariegos, Director of Migration Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala*

Guatemala, within the framework of the MIRPS, has made substantial progress in ensuring the protection and integration of refugees and other persons with protection needs. This includes measures such as issuing special identification documents to facilitate access to essential services and the "Tu Empleo" platform, which connects refugees with formal employment opportunities. Furthermore, through the "Ciudades Solidarias" initiative, Guatemala promotes social and economic integration in host communities, with active participation from 15 municipalities and 4 departmental associations. Actions have also been implemented through Guatemala City and San Benito, as leading cities in the Regional Technical Team on Local Governance. Guatemala reaffirmed its commitment to a humanitarian response based on solidarity, thanking technical partners like UNHCR and the OAS, congratulated Belize for its leadership in 2024, and welcomed Costa Rica and Colombia as the 2025 MIRPS Pro-Tempore Presidency and Chair of the MIRPS Support Platform, respectively.

## **Benque Viejo del Carmen, Belize**

*Ms. Jenny Martinez, Councilor, Representing the Municipality of Benque Viejo del Carmen*

On behalf of Benque Viejo del Carmen, the representative highlighted the fundamental role of local governments in supporting displaced populations and celebrated the significant achievements of the MIRPS Regional Technical Team on Local Governance in 2024. Co-led by the municipalities of Ciudad de Guatemala and San Benito, this year saw increased collaboration, expanded membership, and the promotion of innovative initiatives, as demonstrated through the Second National Conference of Cities of Solidarity in Guatemala and the first in-person meeting of MIRPS local governments. Programs like the reception centers known as CAPMiRs in Guatemala and contributions from Montevideo, Uruguay inspired new strategies to integrate displaced people into host communities. Key efforts included training on the prevention of gender-based violence, integration activities through sports, and the development of local service pathways with the support of UNHCR. As a border city, Benque Viejo del Carmen emphasized the transformative impact of local solutions and expressed gratitude to Guatemala, the co-leading cities, the OAS, UNHCR, and MIRPS partners for their guidance. The intervention highlighted the power of collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity in creating durable solutions for displaced populations.

## **UN Women**

*Ms. Ana Cabrera Cordón, Women, Peace and Security Programmes Analyst*

As a member of the Advisory Panel of the MIRPS Regional Technical Team on Local Governance, UN Women reflected on the progress achieved and their contribution to the implementation of the team's roadmap through key initiatives. This year, members received highly relevant training on the prevention and response to gender-based violence, facilitated by experts from UN Women, the Follow-up Mechanism of the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) of the OAS, and UNHCR. Additionally, local governments shared their good practices on this issue, enriching the exchange of knowledge with the Advisory Panel members. As a result of these efforts, a document is being developed to compile practical tools to strengthen gender-based violence prevention and response programs at the local level.

## **UNDP**

*Mr. Michael Lund, Deputy Resident Representative for UNDP Belize*

UNDP reaffirmed its commitment to supporting displaced people through its offices in Central America. UNDP has implemented activities aimed at strengthening the local capacities of displaced persons and supporting municipalities with specific actions to promote durable solutions. In collaboration with UNHCR, UNDP developed a toolkit to strengthen the rule of law and foster socio-economic integration. These efforts have also focused on enhancing the capacities of government authorities and civil society, ensuring a more inclusive and sustainable approach to addressing internal displacement.



## **Interventions from MIRPS Support Platform Members**

**Moderation:** *Dr. Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian, Director of the Department of Social Inclusion, Organization of American States*

### **United States of America**

*Ms. Jennifer Davis, Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration*

The United States expressed its appreciation to Belize and Costa Rica as 2024 and 2025 MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidencies, respectively, and highlighted that it was an honor to serve as the Chair of the MIRPS Support Platform. The United States expressed its gratitude to the Government of Colombia for taking on this role for 2025. Colombia's leadership in the hemisphere was also recognized, as it assumes the role of Chair of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection. Recognizing that no one country can solve the crisis of irregular migration alone, the United States emphasized the importance of working in partnership, addressing root causes, and enhancing support for integration through comprehensive multi-stakeholder strategies. The efforts of the United States through the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection and the Safe Mobility Initiative are aligned with this holistic approach.

Some key achievements of the U.S. as Chair of the Support Platform included the development of the MIRPS Inventory of Good Practices on Integration and three Learning Events in partnership with the Governments of El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Colombia, focusing on access to mental health and psychosocial support services, economic integration, and durable solutions.

In 2024, PRM provided humanitarian assistance to countries in Central America and Mexico, through international organizations and NGO partners. This assistance intended to support the four MIRPS objectives (improve protection and admission, respond to humanitarian and protection needs, support host countries and communities, and enhance durable solutions for vulnerable people). PRM also recognized the reforms undertaken on asylum and regularization in some MIRPS States and is proud to have worked in partnership on these initiatives. In closing, the United States applauded MIRPS as a model to be considered by other regions.

### **Colombia**

*H.E. Ambassador Isaura Duarte Rodríguez, Refugee Status Determination IWG Coordinator - Technical Secretariat CONARE, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia*

Colombia expressed its gratitude to the United States for its tenure as Chair of the MIRPS Support Platform, highlighting its practical approach and substantial achievements. As the new Chair, Colombia embraces the challenge with commitment and aims to contribute its experiences related to international protection and migration.

Colombia has faced a significant increase in asylum applications and transitioned from managing small numbers to receiving 15,000 applications annually. Despite these difficulties, Colombia is implementing improvements in its approach to case processing and seeks to share its progress with MIRPS members, fostering the practical exchange of experiences to identify effective solutions tailored to the specific contexts of each member State.

In its work plan, the Colombian Chair will prioritize international protection, recognizing the increase in asylum applications across the region. Within this framework, it intends to continue the approach of its predecessors by promoting technical cooperation and expanding synergies with other regional initiatives, such as the Quito Process and the Los Angeles Declaration.

Colombia also aims to strengthen international collaboration and maximize available resources to achieve common objectives. In line with this vision, it plans to organize a solidarity event linked to another regional mechanism, such as the South American Conference on Migration or the Cartagena+40 Process, with the goal of increasing technical and financial support for MIRPS.

As Chair, Colombia will focus on consolidating the progress achieved, sharing experiences, and strengthening regional and international cooperation to respond more effectively to the challenges of displacement and international protection.

## **European Union**

*H.E. Ambassador Erja Askola, Ambassador of the European Union to Jamaica, Belize and the Bahamas*

The EU recognized that the crises impacting Central America are complex and multifaceted, and reaffirmed that the EU stands in solidarity with MIRPS countries, as they work together to enhance the protection of and promote durable solutions for refugees and other displaced persons.

The EU has been a longstanding partner in this endeavor, and its commitment is reflected through its financial support, technical assistance and advocacy for human rights and the dignity of all individuals. The EU provides support for durable solutions and integration of displaced persons, including the social and economic integration of Nicaraguan refugees in Costa Rica, and access to decent jobs for displaced populations in Mexico. The EU has provided support through strengthening the capacities of host countries to provide protection and integration opportunities for refugees, including expanding access to education, healthcare, and livelihoods. The EU reiterated its commitment to working closely with partners in Latin America, including with United Nations agencies, other international organizations, the Red Cross, and international civil society.

*H.E. Maciej Popowski, Director-General, Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) (video intervention)*

The EU recognized the staggering numbers of persons that embark on perilous journeys throughout the region in search of safety and protection, the immense humanitarian needs, and the vulnerabilities of children. DG ECHO conducted a field mission to the region in October 2024, in which the immense needs of persons crossing the Darien were evident.

The EU has mobilized significant resources to support displaced population across the region in 2024, including €25 million for Central American and Mexico, €6 million more than the initial €19 million announced at the VI MIRPS Annual Meeting in January 2024. These funds have been used to address the most critical humanitarian needs in the region. The EU has also supported efforts to ease the asylum and integration pressures of displaced populations in Costa Rica and Mexico.

Despite these efforts, more must be done, and collaboration must be strengthened among partners, donors, and national authorities to ensure adequate reception conditions and support local responses in key hotspots. The EU also called for continued efforts to raise awareness about the situation and advocate for sustained funding to address this growing humanitarian crisis. In closing, the EU reaffirmed its commitment to the MIRPS' shared goals of protecting vulnerable displaced people across the region and mitigating pressures on host countries.

## **Canada**

*Mr. Michael Carter, Director for International Engagement and Capacity Building, Asylum Program and Policy Branch, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada*

Canada expressed gratitude to the Government of Belize for its leadership as MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidency and extended its full support to Costa Rica for its upcoming presidency. Canada has been an active participant in the MIRPS Support Platform, which plays a crucial role in addressing the displacement and migration challenges facing Central America and Mexico.

As co-lead of the Los Angeles Declaration's Action Package Committee on Investing in Asylum, alongside Costa Rica, Canada is focused on helping identify and clearly articulate the capacity building priorities of Member Countries, while leveraging synergies to address those priorities, and helping build and maintain collaboration between different forums. This year marked a significant achievement with the first MIRPS and Quito joint technical meeting of refugee status determination institutions, a milestone in regional cooperation that Canada proudly participated in.

Canada is expanding its capacity building efforts through a new technical collaboration with the Government of Costa Rica, in support to their asylum system modernization strategy. Since March 2022, Canada has supported 33 projects addressing asylum and migration management, labor mobility opportunities, alternative pathways, and socioeconomic integration of refugees and migrants. Canada also remains steadfast in responsibility sharing and durable solution including resettlement and complementary pathways. In March 2023, Canada announced plans to welcome 15,000 people from the Western Hemisphere. From this commitment a new permanent residency pathway was introduced, benefiting 11K Colombian, Haitian and Venezuelan nationals with family ties to Canada. By 31 October 2024, over 10K individuals had been approved for permanent residency with approximately 7K successfully settled in Canada already. Additionally, Canada's economic mobility pathways pilot allows skilled refugees and displaced persons to secure permanent work opportunities in Canada, complementing Canada's commitment to resettle 4K refugees from the Americas by 2028. Canada also actively participates in the Global Task Forces on Refugee Labour Mobility and Third-Country Education Pathways.

Given the need for faster, fairer processing to respond to the increasing numbers of asylum claims in the region, international cooperation remains crucial, and Canada will continue to work with partners to enhance refugee protection, especially for groups facing vulnerable situations such as women and children. In closing, Canada commended the leadership of the United States within the MIRPS Support Platform and congratulated Colombia for assuming the role of Chair in 2025, with Canada's full support for the continued pursuit of protection and shared responsibility.

## **Brazil**

*H.E. Ambassador Agemar Sanctos, Ambassador of Brazil to Belize*

Brazil has been actively involved in the MIRPS Support Platform since its inception in 2019, particularly through sharing information and best practices on reception, processing of asylum cases, and resettlement.

Operation Welcome, a large-scale initiative coordinated by various Brazilian institutions, NGOs, and international partners including UNHCR, has been instrumental in resettling refugees and migrants across 1,000 municipalities in Brazil and providing relevant documentation, housing, jobs, and other opportunities. This effort continues as Brazil hosts over one million refugees and migrants. In 2023, Brazil launched a new national resettlement plan, committed to reception and integration over the next four years.

Brazil also remains dedicated to the Quito Process and is interested in expanding its support to MIRPS, including through collaboration with the public and private sectors and sharing its expertise, particularly in the framework of Operation Welcome. Brazil stands ready to share its expertise in governance, refugee status determination, humanitarian aid, psychosocial support, and labor integration.

Brazil emphasized the importance of closer cooperation between MIRPS and the Quito Process to enhance knowledge exchange and joint project development, as demonstrated in the joint meeting in October 2024 in Panama. The country remains committed to supporting regional efforts to address forced displacement with long-term, collaborative solutions.

## **Spain**

*Ms. María Salcedo, Minister Counselor, Embassy of Spain in Mexico*

Spain reaffirmed its commitment to the MIRPS and its focus on solidarity, responsibility sharing, and the comprehensive protection of refugees and other displaced persons. Spain highlighted the financial, technical, and political support it has provided to address the challenges of forced displacement in Central America and Mexico.

Spain has contributed €7.7 million to the MIRPS over the last four years (2021-2024), channeled through UNHCR and the OAS, in addition to funding specific programs in member countries through AECID and other entities. These initiatives include projects in Belize to provide guidance for asylum-seekers, institutional strengthening in Mexico to enhance identity recognition processes, and assistance to refugees in Darién, Panama, through basic health kits, school supplies, and tools for self-sufficiency.

As the first Chair of the MIRPS Support Platform, Spain laid the foundation for the mechanism, enabling the expansion of alliances with key actors such as development banks and ECLAC.

Spain noted that in 2023, it opened a complementary pathway additional to its national resettlement programs, linked to employment opportunities for refugees. This complementary pathway is channeled through the joint initiative of the Safe Mobility Offices, in which the United States and Canada also participate, together with UNHCR and IOM. This public-private cooperation model emphasizes the employability of refugees as a means of integration.

Spain also promotes innovative initiatives such as the Giga project for digital connectivity for refugees, which is already operational in countries such as Belize, El Salvador, and Panama.

Additionally, Spain is leading consultations on resettlement and complementary pathways for 2024-2025, with key meetings scheduled in Madrid and Geneva in 2025.

Spain praised the leadership of Belize and the United States in the MIRPS and its Support Platform and expressed its support for Costa Rica as the incoming Pro-tempore Presidency and Colombia as Chair of the Support Platform. It reiterated its commitment to the region, advocating for a comprehensive approach involving civil society, the private sector, and international partners to improve conditions for migrants and refugees, particularly in critical contexts such as Darién.

## **World Bank**

*Ms. Ana Aguilera, Senior Social Development Specialist for Latin America and Caribbean, Department of Social Development (video intervention)*

The World Bank reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to the social and economic integration of refugees, as its mandate is stronger than ever to work on this agenda. The World Bank has a new corporate score card that sets 22 indicators to measure its success by 2030. Indicator #20 measures the millions of displaced populations and their host communities that are provided with improved livelihoods and services. As Latin America and the Caribbean hosts 28 percent of the globally displaced and their host communities, this indicator cannot be achieved without substantial investment in this region, aligned with both the development agenda and humanitarian imperative.

The World Bank announced the launch of the Latin American and Caribbean chapter of the Private Sector for Refugees global initiative. The free and online training course “Understanding the private sector/refugees link” is available in English, Spanish and French. This course demonstrates how refugees and other forcibly displaced persons can contribute to host communities through private sector integration, seeks to inspire other partners to contribute, and is part of a broader initiative aiming to provide resources such as international best practices, private sector engagement guidelines, as well as country-specific investment.

## **Inter-American Development Bank**

*Mr. Felipe Muñoz, Chief of Migration Unit (video intervention)*

The IADB works alongside governments in the region to transform the challenges of migration into a development opportunity, including through financial support, grants, technical cooperation, and knowledge production. Since the expansion of the IADB’s mandate in 2022, it currently has projects in every MIRPS country. The Bank has approved 10 loan operations and 9 technical cooperation projects in MIRPS countries, a total of 370M, including 53M in grants from the Bank’s ordinary capital.

The IADB highlighted the fundamental support it is providing to Belize, which now represents its second largest portfolio in the region. There are currently six ongoing operations, with a total of 63M that includes nearly 11M in grants from the ordinary capital in the Bank, in several sectors such as health, education, improving infrastructure, and supporting the government in its regularization process. IADB is currently considering a new operation in Costa Rica that includes 7.5M in non-reimbursable resources to support the government to include children, primarily Nicaraguan children, into its education system.

As it seeks to establish a bridge between humanitarian efforts and development opportunities, IADB referred to these initiatives as an example of the role that the organizations such as IADB must play to support MIRPS countries. IADB will continue working with all members of the Support Platform and MIRPS countries to advance in this endeavor.

## **The MIRPS Fund**

### **Organization of American States**

*Ms. Claudia González Bengoa, Chief of the Migration and Forced Displacement Section, Department of Social Inclusion*

On behalf of the Department of Social Inclusion of the OAS, Ms. Gonzalez presented the progress to date in the implementation of the MIRPS Fund, created in 2020 as a mechanism to mobilize resources and translate commitments into action. Since 2023, the first project portfolio has supported the strengthening of institutional capacities, expanded access to humanitarian assistance, and promoted labor integration and self-sufficiency for displaced persons. With projects in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Panama, more than 24,000 people are already benefiting, with a focus on women, children, and adolescents in vulnerable situations. In 2025, new projects will begin in Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico. In total, more than 100,000 people will benefit.

This effort not only transforms the lives of displaced persons but also contributes to the development of host communities. However, challenges continue to grow, and the MIRPS Fund requires ongoing support to promote solutions. There is a call to continue supporting this fund, which is a tool of hope and transformation, with the OAS committed alongside MIRPS States to provide innovative and humane solutions to forced displacement.

## **Interventions on MIRPS Dialogue Mechanisms**

**Moderation:** *Dr. Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian, Director of the Department of Social Inclusion, Organization of American States*

### **MIRPS Civil Society Dialogue Mechanism**

*Mr. Cristian Andrade, Casa Frida Refugio LGBT+, 2024 Coordinator of MIRPS Civil Society Dialogue Mechanism*

The MIRPS Civil Society Dialogue Mechanism, chaired by Casa Frida Refugio LGBT+ in 2024, reaffirmed the fundamental role of civil society in advancing MIRPS objectives. Representing the 36 organizations that comprise the Mechanism, the importance of collaboration with governments and international agencies was emphasized, to address the growing challenges of forced displacement and mixed movements in Central America.

Civil society organizations highlighted their contributions to the identification and protection of individuals with international protection needs, particularly at borders and reception centers. These efforts were aligned with the MIRPS Regional Action Plan under the Belize Pro-tempore

Presidency. The Mechanism also underscored the need for public policies based on international standards, citing Cartagena +40 and the Chile Plan of Action as key frameworks for addressing forced displacement. It called for the development of inclusive policies that involve displaced populations and host communities, focusing on solutions such as local integration, livelihoods, education, and economic development. Additionally, it emphasized the importance of ensuring adequate budgets for the implementation of these measures.

The Mechanism prioritized the establishment of innovative partnerships with initiatives such as the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection, the Quito Process, and other regional forums to ensure cohesive and aligned efforts. It also highlighted the importance of dialogue and joint efforts, promoting transparency and participatory governance.

Looking ahead, the Mechanism committed to collaborating with the Government of Costa Rica as the next MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidency and urged donors to sustain and expand their support for the humanitarian and protection work carried out by civil society organizations. This collaborative approach remains essential to addressing the complex needs of displaced populations and promoting regional stability.

## **MIRPS Academia Dialogue Mechanism**

*Dr. Cynthia Eve Aird, Provost, Galen University*

Galen University emphasized that the situation of displacement in the region presents deeply complex challenges that demand collective action, collaboration, and shared responsibility. Academia contributes significantly to this endeavor by offering knowledge, research, and insights that not only enrich public policies but also deepen our understanding of causes, dynamics, and effects of displacement across Central America and Mexico.

Under the leadership of Belize as the MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidency and with the support of the MIRPS Technical Secretariat, the MIRPS Academia Dialogue Mechanism was launched on 13 September during the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Interamerican Course on Migration and Protection. This initiative creates a formal platform for collaboration between academic institutions and MIRPS States, fostering dialogue and inter-institutional partnerships.

Galen University is proud to have actively contributed to the development of this mechanism. In July, it joined the University of Belize and the MIRPS Technical Secretariat in Belmopan to share its work on displacement and discuss the mechanism's objectives. This was followed by a broader consultation in which academic institutions across MIRPS States provided invaluable insights on the anticipated benefits and its implementation.

This mechanism will play an important role in translating research into action, so that policies and practices are informed by the latest information and analysis. It is essential to promote rigorous studies and research on displacement, organize related conferences and workshops, and raise awareness within the academic community on the critical issues affecting displaced populations.

Galen University reaffirmed its commitment to this initiative, and noted that in 2025, the MIRPS Academia Dialogue Mechanism will align its efforts with the MIRPS Regional Technical Teams and the commitments of States. By working together, governments, academia, private sector, and civil society can enhance their collective capacities to address displacement and build a future of dignity and opportunity for all displaced persons.

## Private Sector Collaboration

*Ms. Kim Aikman, CEO, Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry*

The Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) emphasized its pivotal role in fostering social and economic development in Belize and its commitment to supporting displaced populations through the MIRPS framework. As Belize's largest private sector membership organization, the BCCI underscored the importance of integrating refugees into the workforce and economy, highlighting the mutual benefits for businesses and displaced individuals.

The BCCI actively contributed to shaping the MIRPS private sector participation mechanism, to facilitate dialogue and collaboration with MIRPS Member States. Additionally, the BCCI provided valuable feedback on the mechanism's structure and identified potential areas for cooperation. These efforts align with the "whole of society approach" of the Global Compact on Refugees, emphasizing shared responsibility and inclusive solutions.

The BCCI outlined four key areas where the private sector can meaningfully contribute:

1. **Employment Opportunities and Economic Integration:** Creating accessible jobs for displaced populations to foster financial independence, contribute to local economies, and enrich workforce diversity.
2. **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Incorporating refugee inclusion and protection into CSR strategies, generating social value and positive public relations.
3. **Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support:** Empowering displaced individuals through initiatives like business incubators, mentorship, and funding to drive economic contributions and innovation.
4. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborating with governments to expand access to education, healthcare, and training for displaced populations.

Additionally, the BCCI emphasized the importance of advocacy and awareness, and leveraging the private sector's influence to promote inclusive policies and shift public narratives toward recognizing refugees' economic and cultural contributions.

The BCCI reaffirmed its commitment to driving impactful change through dialogue, collaboration, and innovation. It looks forward to the launch of the MIRPS Private Sector Dialogue Mechanism in 2025 under Costa Rica's leadership, further advancing regional efforts to support displaced persons.

## Adoption of the Belize City Declaration

MIRPS States adopted the [Belize City Declaration](#), the content of which was previously agreed upon through a consultative process led by Belize as MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidency 2024, through the Missions of the MIRPS States to the OAS.



## Formal handover of the MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidency and Banner

### Belize

*Ms. Tanya Santos, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Immigration of Belize*

Belize reflected on its tenure as MIRPS Pro-Tempore Presidency with gratitude and pride, highlighting the collaborative spirit and commitment of MIRPS States and partners. During its presidency, Belize addressed significant challenges while advancing the collective mechanisms for protecting displaced persons and seeking sustainable solutions.

Belize emphasized its role in fostering regional coordination, ensuring that national challenges were treated as shared regional priorities. Significant progress was achieved in strengthening technical capacities, particularly in asylum processing and protection systems. Belize actively engaged the international community to secure the support necessary for sustaining and enhancing these efforts.

Despite these accomplishments, Belize acknowledged the ongoing challenges posed by the evolving dynamics of mixed movements in the region. It underscored the need for innovative, collective solutions and reaffirmed the importance of solidarity and shared responsibility to uphold the protection and dignity of displaced persons.

Belize officially passed the MIRPS Pro-Tempore Presidency to Costa Rica, recognizing its long-standing dedication to MIRPS principles and expressing confidence in its ability to advance the framework with vision and resolve. Belize committed to remaining an active member of MIRPS, contributing as part of the MIRPS Troika mechanism as past Chair in the coming year.

Belize extended its deep gratitude to all MIRPS Member States, the Technical Secretariat, the Support Platform, and the international community for their support during its presidency. It celebrated the transformative power of regional solidarity, emphasizing that unity can turn challenges into opportunities and create a region of hope and refuge for vulnerable populations.

The handover ceremony concluded with the symbolic transfer of the MIRPS Pro-Tempore Presidency banner to Costa Rica, reflecting the spirit of cooperation and shared commitment to addressing displacement in the region.

### Costa Rica

*H.E. Alejandro Solano, Vice Minister of Multilateral Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica (video intervention)*

The Government of Costa Rica congratulated the Government of Belize for completing its Pro-tempore Presidency, and the Government of Panama, which also completes its mandate as part of the Troika 2024. It also welcomed the Government of El Salvador as part of the Troika 2025.

Costa Rica underlined the importance of the continued follow-up of the MIRPS Regional Technical Teams, which are fundamental in the implementation of MIRPS National Action Plans, and recognized their role in strengthening regional cooperation in key areas, towards an effective regional response to the challenges of forced displacement.

In line with the Belize City Declaration, the Government of Costa Rica proposed three priority areas for its regional plan:

1. Facilitate integration through labor integration and certification of skills, to facilitate environments that allow displaced persons to significantly contribute to their host communities. This will require close partnership with the private sector, academia, and

international organizations to promote the recognition of skills and access to the labor market.

2. Enhance regional coordination with other platforms and key actors, to strengthen linkages and key synergies.
3. Strengthen capacities on disaster-induced displacement, recognizing that human mobility as a response to disasters is increasingly present in the region and requires innovative and coordinated responses. The capacities of member countries will be strengthened, with a focus on the protection of vulnerable people, aligning efforts with the Platform on Disaster Displacement, whose Chairship will be assumed by Costa Rica in 2025.

Costa Rica expressed its gratitude to the MIRPS Support Platform and the Technical Secretariat for their continued support and reiterated that the Government of Costa Rica is prepared to assume the 2025 Presidency with a renewed commitment to protection, integration, and solutions for those most in need.

## **Closing**

### **Belize**

Following the handover of the MIRPS Pro-tempore Presidency, Ms. Tanya Santos, Chief Executive Officer of Immigration of Belize, formally concluded the VII MIRPS Annual Meeting.