

THE SITUATION OF REFUGEES, RETURNEES, AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN THE HEMISPHERE

(Resolution adopted at the seventh plenary session, held on June 4, 1997)

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

CONSIDERING:

That, through its resolutions AG/RES. 774 (XV-O/85), AG/RES. 838 (XVI-O/86), AG/RES. 891 (XVII-O/87), AG/RES. 951 (XVIII-O/88), AG/RES. 1021 (XIX-O/89), AG/RES. 1039 (XX-O/90), AG/RES. 1040 (XX-O/90), AG/RES. 1103 (XXI-O/91), AG/RES. 1170 (XXII-O/92), AG/RES. 1214 (XXIII-O/93), AG/RES. 1273 (XXIV-O/94), AG/RES. 1336 (XXV-O/95), and AG/RES. 1416 (XXVI-O/96), the General Assembly expressed its concern for those who, as refugees, returnees, or internally displaced persons, require protection of their fundamental rights and humanitarian assistance in the Americas;

That, while the current political context in the region is characterized by the growing strengthening of democratic institutions, situations which generate internal and external displacement persist in some countries;

That the Central American Council of Human Rights Ombudsmen convened a Regional Forum on Human Rights, Refugees, and Migrants in Central America, in San José, Costa Rica, in October 1996, which adopted recommendations on measures to protect the rights of migrants and refugees; and

That, at the Second Regional Conference on Migration, held in Panama in March 1997, in which the governments of Central America, Panama, Belize, Canada, the United States, and Mexico participated and international organizations concerned with the issue were represented, the Regional Consultation Forum, characterized by a spirit of dialogue and cooperation, was set up as a permanent mechanism for management of the international migratory phenomenon,

RESOLVES:

1. To urge the governments of countries in the region, when the situation requires, to exert all necessary efforts to resolve internal situations pursuant to applicable legal provisions, paying special attention to the needs of vulnerable populations.
2. To stress the importance of strengthening the rule of law for the consolidation of democratic institutions and absolute respect for human rights aimed at preventing forced displacements and finding lasting solutions for affected populations.
3. To recognize and support the efforts that the governments of the countries concerned are undertaking to provide humanitarian assistance to the displaced populations that request it and urge them to continue to seek lasting solutions.

4. To encourage the governments of the countries in the region that might be affected by the arrival of persons due to the situation in their home countries to take appropriate measures to safeguard the life and security of these persons, in particular those related to the international protection of refugees, in keeping with applicable national and international norms.
5. To consider the need for harmonizing the laws, criteria, and procedures regarding refugees insofar as possible, in order to provide appropriate treatment to persons in that position.
6. To encourage governments that have not yet done so to consider acceding to the international instruments on the status of refugees.
7. To request the General Secretariat to consider strengthening the mechanisms for collaboration and coordination between the Organization of American States and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
8. To take note of the Second Regional Conference on Migration, held in Panama in March 1997, and to acknowledge the progress made, in particular the establishment of the Regional Consultation Forum