

AG/RES. 1602 (XXVIII-O/98)

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

(Resolution adopted at the fifth plenary session, held on June 3, 1998)

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

CONSIDERING:

That, through its resolutions AG/RES. 774 (XV-O/85), AG/RES. 838 (XVI-O/86), 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), AG/RES. 1416 (XXVI-O/96) and AG/RES. 1504 (XXVII-O/97), it expressed its concerns for those persons in the Americas who, as refugees, returnees, or internally displaced persons, require protection of their fundamental rights, as well as the provision of humanitarian assistance;

That, despite the achievement of solutions for the majority of Central American refugees, situations still persist in some countries of the Hemisphere which generate forced displacement, either internal or external, of populations which require adequate attention in regard to both protection and the pursuit of lasting solutions;

That in recent years, the Hemisphere has witnessed progress in the process of strengthening democratic institutions and the upholding of human rights, as well as improvements in the levels of social and economic development of its peoples;

That in recognition of these positive developments, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in cooperation with the Organization of American States, is collaborating with governments in the strengthening of regional and national protection mechanisms, emphasizing its advisory support to states as the entities primarily responsible for the effective application of humanitarian principles and rules of refugee law; and

That the Third Regional Conference on Migration was held in Ottawa, Canada, on February 26 and 27, 1998, with the participation of the Governments of Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and the United States, as well as with the presence as observers of government representatives of Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jamaica, and Peru, which represents an important step forward in a process that is obtaining broad recognition as a forum for discussion on the phenomenon of international migration,

RESOLVES:

1. To urge governments to continue ensuring the observance of the fundamental principles and rules of international refugee protection, and specifically respect for the principle of non-refoulement, the right of every refugee to seek and receive protection and refuge within the existing legal framework in each member state, and the right to return voluntarily to the country of origin or the country of permanent residence.

2. To renew the appeal to the member states which have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the international instruments relating to the status of refugees, as well as to enact internal legislation to ensure the effective application of these instruments.
3. To reiterate its concern about the persistence of situations causing the forced internal displacement of populations; to support governments of affected countries which so request in their efforts aimed at the promotion and protection of the human rights of internally displaced persons; and to recommend that member states take into consideration the contributions and discussions carried out within the framework of the United Nations on the topic of internally displaced persons.
4. To express its satisfaction with the cooperation between the Organization of American States and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and to request that the General Secretariat intensify this cooperation in support of efforts made by member states to find solutions for these populations, with particular emphasis on the specific needs of refugee, displaced, and returnee women, elderly persons, and children.
5. To underscore the achievements of the Third Regional Conference on Migration, held last February in Ottawa, and, in particular, the adoption of a plan of action that includes the objective of ensuring the international protection of refugees in its chapter on human rights.