



# CENTRAL AMERICA, NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

REGIONAL STRATEGY  
2020–2024

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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# CENTRAL AMERICA, NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

REGIONAL STRATEGY  
2020–2024



# FOREWORD

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In November 2019, the IOM Strategic Vision was presented to Member States. It reflects the Organization's view of how it will need to develop over a five-year period, in order to effectively address complex challenges and seize the many opportunities migration offers to both migrants and society. It responds to new and emerging responsibilities – including membership in the United Nations and coordination of the United Nations Network on Migration – as we enter the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. As part of the implementation of the Strategic Vision, I asked each of the Regional Offices to develop its own strategic priorities for the 2020–2024 period, integrating key elements of the Vision to respond to emerging needs within the region.

This regional strategy reflects the essential role that IOM plays in the field of human mobility: protecting, assisting and supporting migrants across the world, developing effective responses to the shifting dynamics of migration, and serving as a key source of advice on migration policy, research, data and practice. It also highlights the critical work that IOM undertakes in emergency situations, developing the resilience of communities and mobile populations, and particularly those in vulnerable situations, while building capacity within governments to manage all forms and impacts of mobility.

Most importantly, this strategy highlights the current and future regional and cross-regional trends and challenges with respect to migration and situations of displacement, and outlines how IOM will seek to address them, including through collaboration with United Nations agencies and other partners.

I would like to thank colleagues at all levels of the Organization – and particularly at the regional and country levels – for their diligent and insightful work in developing this strategy, which places IOM's global strategic objectives in context and sets out a course of action to achieve them. It is particularly timely, given the high salience of human mobility in public discourse, and as operational needs on the ground, particularly in the humanitarian sphere, are becoming more complex in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under this strategy, IOM colleagues will engage with a wide range of stakeholders in all countries in the region, along with key regional bodies, including economic communities, consultative processes and multilateral forums, on the priorities it sets out. I and all my colleagues look forward to working with you over the next years to ensure that migration is safe, orderly and regular for the benefit of all. Together, we can respond to the needs and aspirations of migrants and displaced populations around the world, building societies fit for a modern, mobile and interconnected world.



**António Vitorino**  
Director General  
International Organization for Migration

“

*It is my great privilege and pleasure to present IOM’s Regional Strategy for Central America, North America and the Caribbean 2020–2024. It provides a forward-looking framework that identifies key migration challenges, opportunities and priorities centred around three pillars: addressing the adverse drivers of migration; facilitating safe, regular and orderly forms of migration; and serving as a trusted and effective thought leader and partner of migrants, Member States, regional organizations, processes and initiatives, United Nations agencies, civil society, academia, the private sector, and media, among others. The regional strategy is a living tool for IOM missions in the region to leverage migration for sustainable development, protect and assist migrants, and ensure no one is left behind.*

”

**Michele Klein Solomon**

Regional Director

Central America, North America and the Caribbean

International Organization for Migration

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# ACRONYMS

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<b>CA-4</b>	Central America-4 Free Mobility Agreement
<b>CMC</b>	Caribbean Migration Consultations
<b>COMMCA</b>	Council of Ministers of Women's Affairs of Central America and the Dominican Republic (Spanish: <i>Consejo de Ministras de la Mujer de Centroamérica y República Dominicana</i> )
<b>CORETT</b>	Regional Coalition against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants
<b>COVID-19</b>	coronavirus disease 2019
<b>CSME</b>	Caribbean Community Single Market and Economy
<b>DACA</b>	Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals
<b>ECLAC/UNECLAC</b>	(United Nations) Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>GBV</b>	gender-based violence
<b>GDP</b>	gross domestic product
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>INCOSAMI</b>	Joint Initiative on Health and Migration (Spanish: <i>Iniciativa Conjunta de Salud para las Personas Migrantes y sus Familias Centroamérica y México</i> )
<b>MIRPS</b>	Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (Spanish: <i>Marco Integral Regional para la Protección y Soluciones</i> )
<b>OCAM</b>	Central American Commission of Migration Directors (Spanish: <i>Comisión Centroamericana de Directores de Migración</i> )
<b>OECS</b>	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
<b>PAIM-SICA</b>	Action Plan for the Comprehensive Management of Migration in the Countries of the Central American Integration System (Spanish: <i>Plan de Acción para la Atención Integral de la Migración en la Región del Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana</i> )
<b>PRIMI</b>	Regional Platform for Migration Information (Spanish: <i>Plataforma Regional de Información sobre Migración</i> )
<b>R4V</b>	Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants
<b>RIAM</b>	Ibero-American Network of Migration Authorities (Spanish: <i>Red Iberoamericana de Autoridades Migratorias</i> )





<b>RMRP</b>	Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela
<b>SDG(s)</b>	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
<b>SICA</b>	Central American Integration System (Spanish: <i>Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana</i> )
<b>UNHCR</b>	(Office of the) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees





1.

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# INTRODUCTION





# INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

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IOM is the leading international organization in the field of human mobility, supporting countries, communities and migrants around the world by providing effective, coordinated operational responses and policy advice to complex and shifting dynamics of migration in Central America, North America and the Caribbean.

The work of IOM can be viewed through three lenses – [resilience](#), [mobility](#) and [governance](#) – which set out a series of strategic priorities based on an assessment of what to expect until 2024 in terms of migration dynamics and migrant needs in a complex political, social and economic context.

The core values and principles of IOM are at the heart of its work. The Organization holds itself to high standards, guided by the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including upholding human rights for all. Respect for the rights, dignity, empowerment and well-being of all migrants and their communities remains paramount. IOM has always assisted governments in their effective implementation of international standards in its programming, and will continue to do so. In addition to the values enshrined in the IOM Constitution, the Organization continues to adhere to the core United Nations values of integrity, professionalism, equality and respect for diversity, as well as ensuring that it is accountable to its beneficiaries, and plays an active role in preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.

IOM aligns its work with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the context of a reformed United Nations system. The commitment to leave no one behind can only be achieved with the full consideration of migrants and their families and communities. IOM will promote gender-sensitive approaches, whether through its general programming or its gender-specific programming.

As the Coordinator and Secretariat of the United Nations Network on Migration IOM assists countries wishing to implement the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The principles and objectives of the Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF), which was welcomed by Member States in 2015, will continue to underpin the Organization's activities.

Since early 2020, Central America, North America and the Caribbean has been impacted by COVID-19. While the short-term impacts are already being felt most acutely by vulnerable groups, the longer-term, socioeconomic, development-related and humanitarian consequences are yet to be fully determined. These outcomes will continue to impact the needs of migrants and other populations on the move, host communities and governments and must therefore be fully reflected in IOM programming, which has already shifted in response. This regional strategy should therefore be read in light of these developments and will be reviewed periodically to ensure the necessary response to address ongoing and emerging impacts of the pandemic and other significant regional and global developments.

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<sup>1</sup> For definitions of migration-related terminology used in this document, please consult: IOM, *IOM Glossary on Migration*, International Migration Law No. 34. (Geneva, 2019). Available at [www.iom.int/glossary-migration-2019](http://www.iom.int/glossary-migration-2019).

The Regional Strategy for Central America, North America and the Caribbean has been developed in coordination and consultation with IOM country offices, regional thematic specialists, the Office of the Director General's Special Envoy for the Regional Response to the Venezuelan Situation and IOM Headquarters, notably the Office of the Director General, the Senior Regional Advisor for the Americas, the Department of Migration Management, the Department of Operations and Emergencies, and the Department of International Cooperation and Partnerships.

## 1.1. VISION STATEMENT 2020–2024

By 2024, IOM in Central America, North America and the Caribbean will be recognized for effectively contributing to actions in the following strategic priorities, grouped under the three pillars of [resilience](#), [mobility](#) and [governance](#).

### (a) [Resilience: Addressing the adverse drivers of migration](#)

- (i) Strengthen disaster preparedness, reduce the risk of displacement and respond to crises.
- (ii) Foster social cohesion, reduce violence and encourage inclusive socioeconomic development in communities of origin and return.
- (iii) Facilitate the sustainable reintegration of migrants and affected populations.
- (iv) Advance adaptation to both sudden and slow-onset natural disasters, adverse effects of climate change, and environment degradation.
- (v) Reduce the costs of remittances, enhance the impact of remittances and facilitate direct diaspora engagement in development.
- (vi) Provide accessible and equitable quality health, including mental health services.
- (vii) Enhance the respect, protection and the fulfilment of the rights of migrants, and assist those who are vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse, particularly women, children, youth, victims of trafficking and stranded migrants, among others.

### (b) [Mobility: Facilitating safe, regular and orderly forms of migration](#)

- (i) Support orderly migration processes with proven, practical solutions for registering and regularizing migrants, managing their identities, and combating migration fraud, as well as preventing, detecting and responding to health threats linked to migration.
- (ii) Develop flexible and innovative mobility schemes based on national development plans, labour market needs and the impacts of disasters, or for purposes of family reunification, among others.
- (iii) Ensure the safe and dignified return of migrants and affected populations.

- (c) **Governance: Serving as a trusted and effective leader and partner in relevant bilateral, regional and global initiatives and processes**
- (i) Effectively coordinate United Nations engagement in the area of migration at the country and regional levels, notably towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration.
  - (ii) Build new and deepen existing partnerships, and create synergies with regional processes and initiatives.
  - (iii) Forge strategic partnerships, especially with development actors, to enhance the scope and impact of IOM programmes and projects.
  - (iv) Enhance the capacity of governments to collect, analyse and use migration and internal displacement data for evidence-based policymaking.
  - (v) Strengthening national, provincial and local governments' ability to develop and implement well-managed migration policies.

IOM will implement this regional strategy for Central America, North America and the Caribbean in collaboration with Member States and their national, provincial and local authorities, regional organizations, processes and initiatives, United Nations agencies, civil society, academia, the private sector, media and other relevant stakeholders.

# 2.

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## POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL OUTLOOK FOR THE REGION



## 2. POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL OUTLOOK FOR THE REGION

### 2.1. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

#### 2.1.1. Opportunities

- (a) IOM is a lead actor in regional initiatives and processes that provide guiding frameworks and identify priorities validated by Member States.
- (b) Attention throughout the region on the need to address migration and displacement linked to climate change and environment degradation has increased.
- (c) There is strong emphasis on legal frameworks and the rights of migrants.
- (d) As the Coordinator of the United Nations Network on Migration, IOM can apply its experiences, tools and approaches to a wide range of migration challenges in the region.
- (e) IOM's Regional Knowledge Hub on Migration,<sup>2</sup> a source of relevant data and information on human mobility in the region, can contribute to the global Knowledge Platform and Connection Hub of the United Nations Network on Migration.

#### 2.1.2. Challenges

- (a) A socioeconomic context marked by poverty and inequality and exacerbated by corruption is threatening to erode the foundations of the region's economic well-being, political stability and rule of law.<sup>3</sup>
- (b) The COVID-19 pandemic and its health and socioeconomic impacts have provoked a major economic slowdown in the region, inevitably influencing migration flows, labour mobility and remittances, among others. The pandemic has also affected government priorities.
- (c) Regional processes and initiatives do not always work in synergy, complicating the understanding of thematic priorities, which actors should be involved and what activities are necessary to address them.
- (d) There is further need to integrate migration into other policy areas, such as finance, labour, health, agriculture, industry, planning, statistics, and climate and disasters.
- (e) The involvement and participation of the private sector, an essential actor in labour migration, is often limited.

<sup>2</sup> The Regional Knowledge Hub is available at <https://kmhub.iom.int>.

<sup>3</sup> Eduardo Engel, Delia Ferreira Rubio, Daniel Kaufmann, Armando Lara Yaffar, Jorge Londoño Saldarriaga, Beth Simone Noveck, Mark Pieth and Susan Rose-Ackerman, *Report of the Expert Advisory Group on Anti-Corruption, Transparency, and Integrity in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Washington, D.C., Inter-American Development Bank, 2018). Available at <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Report-of-the-Expert-Advisory-Group-on-Anti-Corruption-Transparency-and-Integrity-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean.pdf>.



## 2.2. CURRENT AND FUTURE KEY PARTNERS

IOM will strengthen its work with other United Nations agencies based on its role as the Coordinator of the United Nations Network on Migration,<sup>4</sup> as part of the United Nations Reform, and in the context of regional processes and initiatives. Co-led by IOM and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), the 2020 regional review of the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration will provide an opportunity for Member States to advance its implementation.

The United States, through its Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migrants (PRM), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (the “TIP Office”) and other offices, has been and will likely remain a vital partner for IOM in the region. This includes support to the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) for refugees and migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Western Hemisphere Programme, which has matured and is expected to continue to provide significant programmatic and policy support to numerous countries in Central America and the Caribbean.

Canada has been a steady supporter of IOM in the region, including through the RMRP. IOM will seek to expand its partnership with Canada, including in areas such as labour migration and gender issues.

IOM has intensified outreach to extraregional partners, notably the European Union, including through its Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP). The European Union is a potential partner for the implementation of the RMRP, the Action Plan for the Comprehensive Management of Migration in the Countries of the Central American Integration System (PAIM-SICA), and the Comprehensive Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, as well as activities in the Caribbean, given its historical legacy.

Supporting the reintegration of Guatemalan returnees, Japan has also become a donor to IOM in the region.

The IOM Development Fund has been instrumental in spearheading a series of innovative initiatives in the region, including the mainstreaming of migration in development planning and the development of PAIM-SICA.

Given their size and potential to contribute development in home countries through remittances, investments and professional engagement, diaspora groups will be an important partner for IOM in the next four years.

In the context of environmental migration, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, IOM will be working with key partners, such as the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). IOM will also see innovative collaboration with other entities, such as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), particularly in areas that

<sup>4</sup> Local (i.e. country-level) United Nations Networks on Migration (or Migration Networks) are essential platforms for providing a coherent United Nations response to help address countries' migration priorities based on the Global Compact for Migration. These country-level United Nations Migration Networks currently exist in several countries in the region.

are becoming increasingly relevant, such as issues on the nexus between environmental migration and health, including zoonotic diseases.

In the context of migration health, IOM will be working with key public health partners in the region, including the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) and other United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sector and academia. Through these initiatives, IOM will accelerate progress towards building countries' capacities to strengthen their health systems' response to migration and supporting the mainstreaming of migrants' health needs into national health policies and programmes.

To harness the development potential of migration at the local level, IOM will build on and strengthen relationships with provincial and local governments in places directly experiencing causes and consequences of migration and internal displacement, as well as return, reintegration and transit mobility.

IOM will continue to work closely with civil society partners and faith-based organizations across the region, particularly in providing direct assistance, shelter and other services to migrants in situations of vulnerability.

The private sector is a critical actor, serving as employers of migrants or providers of services for them, for instance, remittance transfers. IOM will deepen and broaden its engagement with companies for them to meet fair and ethical recruitment standards and to provide innovative solutions to a range of other migration challenges.

Several regional processes and initiatives addressing migration in the region (see Annex 2) were established in recent years – a reflection of the urgent need to assist and protect migrants, improve migration governance and promote sustainable development.

These initiatives provide critical platforms for IOM to position the Organization and engage with governments, United Nations partners and others, at both the political and programmatic levels. The regional level has shown great potential and achieved progress on many aspects of migration governance. IOM will prioritize engagement with regional processes and initiatives where it has been recognized as an indispensable actor and that are of fundamental importance for addressing the challenges of migration and realizing its benefits (see Annex 2).

# 3.

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## MIGRATION OUTLOOK FOR THE REGION



## 3. MIGRATION OUTLOOK FOR THE REGION

### 3.1. CONTEXT

Central America, North America and the Caribbean is a diverse region with 23 countries and numerous territories, and a total population of 587.3 million in 2019.<sup>5</sup> It includes small Caribbean island States with less than 100,000 inhabitants and countries with populations of more than 100 million.

The region includes the largest economy in the world but also one of its poorest countries.<sup>6</sup> Poverty and socioeconomic inequalities are staggering, not only among countries but also within countries.<sup>7</sup> Structural challenges contribute to persistent socioeconomic disparities, including gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV).<sup>8</sup> These factors have a considerable impact on migration dynamics, compelling many people to move.

As measured by average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development<sup>9</sup> – a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living – the countries of the region are categorized as follows:

- (a) *Very high*: the Bahamas, Barbados, Canada and the United States;
- (b) *High*: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago;
- (c) *Medium*: El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras and Nicaragua;
- (d) *Low*: Haiti.

Unlocking inclusive and sustainable economic growth remains crucial for improving the living standards of individuals and families, as well as entire communities and countries. Measured by national competitiveness – defined as the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine level of productivity – countries in the region, with the exception of the United States, Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica and Panama, rank in the lower 50 percentile. El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua rank in the lower third of 141 countries worldwide, with Haiti listed almost at the bottom of the global rankings.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), International migrant stock 2019, data set. Available at [www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp) (accessed 4 November 2019).

<sup>6</sup> World Bank Data Team, New country classifications by income level: 2019–2020, World Bank Data Blogs, 1 July 2019. Available at <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/new-country-classifications-income-level-2019-2020>.

<sup>7</sup> Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Development Bank of Latin America, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the European Commission, *Latin American Economic Outlook 2019: Development in Transition* (Paris, OECD, 2019). Available at <https://doi.org/10.1787/g2g9ff18-en>.

<sup>8</sup> ECLAC, *Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030* (Montevideo, United Nations, 2017). Available at [www.cepal.org/en/publications/41013-montevideo-strategy-implementation-regional-gender-agenda-within-sustainable](http://www.cepal.org/en/publications/41013-montevideo-strategy-implementation-regional-gender-agenda-within-sustainable).

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2019 (Beyond Income, Beyond Averages, Beyond Today: Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century)* (New York, 2019). Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Klaus Schwab, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2019* (Geneva, World Economic Forum, 2019). Available at [www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf).

**Table 1. Selected country context indicators, 2019**

Subregion and countries	GNI per capita <sup>a</sup> income level (amount in USD)	Human Development Index <sup>b</sup> score (value)	Global Competitiveness Index 2019 <sup>c</sup> rank (score)	INFORM Global Risk Index <sup>d</sup> level (risk)
<b>North America</b>				
United States	High (65,760)	Very high (.920)	2 (83.7)	Low (3.4)
Canada	High (46,370)	Very high (.922)	14 (79.6)	Low (2.4)
Mexico	Upper-middle (9,430)	High (.767)	48 (64.9)	High (5.1)
<b>Central America</b>				
Panama	High (14,950)	High (.795)	66 (61.6)	Low (3.1)
Costa Rica	Upper-middle (11,700)	High (.794)	62 (62.0)	Low (2.9)
Belize	Upper-middle (4,450)	High (.720)	–	Low (2.2)
Guatemala	Upper-middle (4,610)	Medium (.651)	98 (53.5)	High (5.5)
El Salvador	Lower-middle (4,000)	Medium (.667)	103 (52.6)	Medium (4.1)
Honduras	Lower-middle (2,390)	Medium (.623)	101 (52.7)	High (5.0)
Nicaragua	Lower-middle (1,910)	Medium (.651)	109 (51.5)	Medium (4.4)
<b>Caribbean</b>				
Bahamas	High (31,780)	Very high (.805)	–	Low (2.2)
Saint Kitts and Nevis	High (19,030)	High (.777)	–	Very low (1.6)
Barbados	High (17,380)	Very high (.813)	77 (58.9)	Very low (1.7)
Antigua and Barbuda	High (16,660)	High (.776)	–	Low (2.3)
Trinidad and Tobago	High (16,890)	High (.799)	79 (58.3)	Very low (1.9)
Saint Lucia	Upper-middle (11,020)	High (.745)	–	Very low (1.9)
Grenada	Upper-middle (9,980)	High (.763)	–	Very low (1.4)
Cuba	Upper-middle (7,480 <sup>e</sup> )	High (.778)	–	Low (3.3)
Dominica	Upper-middle (8,090)	High (.724)	–	Low (3.4)
Dominican Republic	Upper-middle (8,090)	High (.745)	78 (58.3)	Medium (3.9)
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Upper-middle (7,460)	High (.728)	–	Very low (1.7)
Suriname	Upper-middle (5,540)	High (.724)	–	Low (3.0)
Jamaica	Upper-middle (5,250)	High (.726)	80 (58.3)	Low (2.6)
Guyana	Upper-middle (5,180)	Medium (.670)	–	Low (3.1)
Haiti	Low (790)	Low (.503)	138 (36.3)	Very high (6.5)

Colour legend



- Notes: <sup>a</sup> World Bank, gross national income (GNI) per capita, Atlas method (current USD), data set. Available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNPPCAP.CD> (accessed 10 August 2020).  
<sup>b</sup> UNDP, 2019 Human Development Index ranking, webpage. Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/2019-human-development-index-ranking>.  
<sup>c</sup> Klaus Schwab, The Global Competitiveness Report 2019 (see footnote 10).  
<sup>d</sup> INFORM, *INFORM Report 2019: Shared Evidence for Managing Crises and Disasters* (Brussels, 2019). Available at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Inform%202019%20WEB%20spreads.pdf>.  
<sup>e</sup> This value is for 2016, the most recent year that data is available.



In addition, increasingly severe and frequent natural hazards, such as storms and floods, cause serious damage in and heighten countries' economic and social vulnerability.<sup>11</sup> Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions can have similar effects. Slow-onset processes, such as droughts, desertification and sea-level rise, also severely affect the region. In 2018, the countries with the highest levels of new displacement due to natural hazards were the United States (916,000 displacements), Canada (41,000), Guatemala (21,000) and Mexico (16,000).<sup>12</sup> Evidence also shows that migration and internal displacement are linked to slower-onset processes in several countries of the region.<sup>13</sup>

Central and North America have relatively high ratification rates of core human rights standards. Most countries in these subregions have ratified at least seven of the nine core conventions. However, some of these countries have limited capacity to meet their international obligations under these treaties. On the other hand, adherence to international human rights standards is significantly lower in the Caribbean, with only 7 out of 14 countries having ratified at most five core conventions and with only 2 having ratified 8 of the 9 core conventions.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.2. MIGRATION TRENDS

There has historically been a trend of migrating to the United States and Canada. In 2019, over 26.6 million migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean were residing in either country. They comprised the largest group, followed by migrants born in Asia (17.4 million) and Europe (7 million).<sup>15</sup> In 2019, the stock of migrants in Canada from Latin America and the Caribbean represented 2.5 per cent of the total population, whereas they represented 7.6 per cent of the total population in the United States.<sup>16</sup>

Over 9.1 million people born in the Caribbean live outside their country of origin, primarily in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.<sup>17</sup> In fact, net emigration rates for Caribbean countries are one of the highest globally. This has major impacts on smaller countries, such as Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and Grenada, as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines,<sup>18</sup> which face a shortage of qualified labour in critical sectors, including health care and education.<sup>19</sup>

An estimated 10.5 million irregular migrants were living in the United States in 2017, accounting for 3.2 per cent of the total population.<sup>20</sup> The number of irregular migrants from Central America – mostly from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras – increased from 1.5 million in 2007 to 1.9 million in 2017.<sup>21</sup> Over 1 million nationals of Central American

<sup>11</sup> Graciela O. Magrin, José A. Marengo, Jean Philippe Boulanger, Marcos S. Buckeridge, Edwin Castellanos, Germán Poveda, Fabio R. Scarano and Sebastián Vicuña, 2014, "Central and South America", in: *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. Part B: Regional Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (V.R. Barros, C.B. Field, D.J. Dokken, M.D. Mastrandrea, K.J. Mach, T.E. Bilir, M. Chatterjee, K.L. Ebi, Y. O. Estrada, R.C. Genova, B. Girma, E.S. Kissel, A.N. Levy, S. MacCracken, P. R. Mastrandrea, and L.L. White (eds.)) (Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, Cambridge University Press), pp. 1499–1566. Available at [www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WGIIAR5-Chap27\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WGIIAR5-Chap27_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2020* (Geneva, 2020). Available at [www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/2020-IDMC-GRID.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/2020-IDMC-GRID.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Climate Change and Land* (An IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems) (V. Masson-Delmotte et al. (eds.)) (Geneva, 2019). Available at [www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/11/SRCCCL-Full-Report-Compiled-191128.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/11/SRCCCL-Full-Report-Compiled-191128.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), Universal Human Rights instruments. Available at [www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/coreinstruments.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/coreinstruments.aspx) (accessed 28 October 2020).

<sup>15</sup> UN DESA, International migrant stock by origin and destination 2019 (see footnote 5) (accessed 9 November 2020).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> UN DESA, International migrant stock by origin and destination 2019 (see footnote 5) (accessed 8 December 2020).

<sup>18</sup> World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016* (third edition, Washington, D.C., 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> IOM, *World Migration Report 2020* (Geneva, 2019), pp. 111–113. Available at: [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr\\_2020.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

and Caribbean countries reside in the United States under the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (DACA) (679,740)<sup>22</sup> and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) (417,341)<sup>23</sup> programmes. Canada also has a significant number of irregular migrants: in the two years prior to June 2019, more than 45,000 migrants were reported to have crossed into Canada irregularly.<sup>24</sup>

Since the end of 2018, a new trend of migration in large groups from northern Central America to Mexico and onwards to the United States has represented a considerable challenge for governments, local authorities, migrants and other stakeholders. In its fiscal year 2019, the United States apprehended over 851,000<sup>25</sup> migrants at its border with Mexico, and the percentage of family groups apprehended at the countries' shared border rose from 27 per cent to 56 per cent.

Since the passage of the Refugee Act in 1980, the United States has admitted more than 3 million refugees representing over 60 nationalities. In Canada, refugee resettlement is part of the country's overall immigration policy. Annual refugee resettlement figures were 46,000 (including Syrian refugees) in 2016, 25,566 in 2017, 27,000 in 2018 and 29,950 in 2019.

Human trafficking, especially trafficking of women for sexual exploitation, remains a challenge in the region, despite significant efforts by governments to establish and strengthen legislative frameworks, develop national referral systems, and build capacity to respond and prevent human trafficking. Most countries in the region have established a counter-trafficking response at the national level, led by national counter-trafficking entities, bringing together many sectors, including civil society. Most identified victims of trafficking in the region are women trafficked for sexual exploitation.<sup>26</sup>

In recent years, returns classified as deportations or expedited removals from the United States and Mexico to countries in northern Central America have consistently numbered above 140,000 per year. In the first eight months of 2019, the figure was close to 180,000, with more than 100,000 returning from Mexico alone.<sup>27</sup> While countries of origin have built systems to provide reception support, more work is needed to ensure the sustainable reintegration of those returning either voluntarily or through humanitarian assistance programmes, and those returned by governments.

In July 2019, Mexico started receiving individuals and families – predominantly nationals from countries in northern Central America coming from the United States – under the United States' Migrant Protection Protocols (MPPs). By 31 December 2019, 84,000 people had been returned to Mexico to await their court date for their asylum process in the United States.

<sup>22</sup> United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, Approximate active DACA recipients: country of birth (as of 31 January 2019), data set. Available at [www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/6\\_Approximate\\_Active\\_DACA\\_Recipients\\_Demographics\\_-\\_Jan\\_31\\_2019.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/6_Approximate_Active_DACA_Recipients_Demographics_-_Jan_31_2019.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> Jill H. Wilson, "Temporary protected status: Overview and current issues" (updated 1 April 2020), Congressional Research Service report, 29 March 2019. Available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/homesecc/RS20844.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Although estimates vary widely, and accurate numbers are difficult to establish. (IOM, *World Migration Report 2020*, pp. 111–113).

<sup>25</sup> United States Customs and Border Protection, Southwest border migration (fiscal year 2019), data set. Available at [www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/sw-border-migration](http://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/sw-border-migration) (accessed 10 October 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> IOM, *Iniciativa de Gestión de la Información de Movilidad Humana en el Triángulo Norte* [Northern Triangle Migration Information Initiative], database (2019). Available at <https://mic.iom.int/webntmi> (accessed 29 October 2020).



The number of extraregional migrants<sup>28</sup> – mainly from Africa and Asia – transiting through Central America and entering Panama from Colombia increased from 1,129 in 2014 to over 9,100 in 2019.<sup>29</sup> The national composition varied greatly, even from week to week, which may be mainly South Asians in a given one week and an entirely African population the next.<sup>30</sup>

Since 2015, over 5 million Venezuelans have left their country. Around 708,000 are currently in 10 countries and territories in the region: Aruba (17,000), Canada (20,775), Costa Rica (29,600), Curaçao (16,500), the Dominican Republic (34,000), Guyana (22,000), Mexico (73,115), Panama (120,642), Trinidad and Tobago (24,000) and the United States (351,144).<sup>31</sup> In some of the small Caribbean island States, Venezuelans can make up a significant portion of the population.

There are close to 500,000 Haitians in neighbouring Dominican Republic.<sup>32</sup> Many also transit through Central America or seek to reach the Bahamas, from where many have been deported following hurricane Dorian in 2019. Some regular migration options for Haitians exist, for instance, to Brazil and Chile, notably through IOM visa application centres.

There has been longstanding migration between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, with the number of migrants and asylum seekers growing following the events of April 2018 and the ensuing economic crisis. An estimated 359,827 Nicaraguans had authorization to reside in Costa Rica by the end of 2019.<sup>33</sup>

While Cuban migration is now lower compared to the 2015–2016 period, it remains at significant levels. In 2019, over 7,400 were apprehended by Mexican authorities.

Another concern refers to missing migrants: since 2016, more than 100 migrants have died or gone missing in the region each year. According to the Missing Migrants Project,<sup>34</sup> many have drowned in the Caribbean or lost their lives at the United States' border with Mexico.

With USD 35.6 billion in 2018, Mexico is the world's second largest recipient of remittances. In several countries,<sup>35</sup> remittances represent a large and often growing percentage of GDP, even while the cost of sending money back home remain well above the 3 per cent threshold in Target 10.c of the SDGs.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that many countries include Haitians and Cubans in their definition of "extraregional migrants" (in 2019, 10,510 Haitian migrants and 3,276 Cuban migrants travelled irregularly across the Colombia–Panama border).

(Panama, National Migration Service, *Irregulares en Tránsito frontera Panamá-Colombia* [Irregular migrants crossing the Panama–Colombia border], database, Available at [www.migracion.gob.pa/inicio/estadisticas](http://www.migracion.gob.pa/inicio/estadisticas) (accessed 29 October 2020).)

<sup>29</sup> Mainly from Cameroon (24%), India (23%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (14%), Bangladesh (11%), Angola (7%) and other extraregional countries (21%). (Panama, National Migration Service, *Irregulares en Tránsito frontera Panamá-Colombia*, database, Available at [www.migracion.gob.pa/inicio/estadisticas](http://www.migracion.gob.pa/inicio/estadisticas) (accessed 28 October 2020).)

<sup>30</sup> Panama, National Migration Service, *Irregulares en tránsito frontera Panamá-Colombia* [Irregular migrants crossing the Panama–Colombia border], database, Available at [www.migracion.gob.pa/inicio/estadisticas](http://www.migracion.gob.pa/inicio/estadisticas) (accessed September 2019).

<sup>31</sup> R4V: *Plataforma de Coordinación para Refugiados y Migrantes de Venezuela* [Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela], Refugee and Migrant Response Plan 2020, database, Available at <https://r4v.info/es/situations/platform> (accessed 28 May 2020).

<sup>32</sup> Dominican Republic, National Statistics Office (ONE), ENI-2017: *Segunda Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes* [Second National Inquiry on Migrants] (Santo Domingo, 2017). Available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/dominican-republic/eni-2017-segunda-encuesta-nacional-de-inmigrantes-versi-n-resumida-del>.

<sup>33</sup> Costa Rica, General Directorate for Migration and Foreigners (DGME), *Estadísticas DGME Generales : Informes estadísticos anuales* [General DGME statistics: annual statistical reports 2020], database, Available at [www.migracion.go.cr/Paginas/Centro%20de%20Documentaci%C3%B3n/Estad%C3%ADsticas.aspx](http://www.migracion.go.cr/Paginas/Centro%20de%20Documentaci%C3%B3n/Estad%C3%ADsticas.aspx), (accessed 28 October 2020).

<sup>34</sup> The Missing Migrants Project website is available at <https://missingmigrants.iom.int>.

<sup>35</sup> El Salvador (20.7%), Dominica (9.2%), Guatemala (12.1%), Honduras (20.1%), Haiti (32.5%) and Jamaica (15.9%). (World Bank, Personal remittances received (% of GDP), data set, Available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS> (accessed 29 October 2020).)

<sup>36</sup> World Bank, Personal remittances received (% of GDP), data set, Available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS> (accessed September 2019).



Within the region, another migration trend is characterized by indigenous people moving internationally for labour reasons. The region has several corridors – namely, Costa Rica–Panama, Nicaragua–Costa Rica and Guatemala–Belize – and a significant presence of temporary workers belonging to indigenous people groups.<sup>37</sup> Despite some progress, indigenous people who migrate still face considerable challenges in terms of their normative, socioeconomic and sociocultural integration. In particular, the working conditions of indigenous people who have migrated to other countries of the region are often more precarious than other groups of migrants, especially in terms of discriminatory treatment and access to basic services and labour justice.<sup>38</sup>

Disasters caused new displacement of 1,022,606 persons in 13 countries in the region in 2019, notably in the United States, Canada, Guatemala and Mexico, whereas conflict and violence forced 464,563 people to move, predominantly from El Salvador.<sup>39</sup> Internal movements are also related to slower-onset processes, such as land degradation, desertification and sea-level rise, but they remain less quantifiable.

### 3.3. DRIVERS OF MIGRATION

Migration in the region takes place in a context marked by historical, political, economic and social ties between countries, huge internal and intraregional socioeconomic disparities, political instability, insecurity, and violence in some countries, as well as severe and frequent natural hazards compounded by slow-onset environmental changes.

The lack of employment opportunities, low incomes, poor or informal working conditions, violence (including GBV), organized crime, persecution, insecurity combined with poverty, and droughts and floods – exacerbated by the lack of access to effective social services such as health and education – are the key factors behind people seeking to leave Mexico, Cuba, Haiti and countries in Central America, in search for family reunification and better opportunities abroad.<sup>40</sup>

Until comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable growth and a major reduction in violence and insecurity reach an overwhelming portion of the citizens in migrant-sending countries and enable dignified livelihoods, including access to adequate social services, migration will be viewed as a necessity rather than a choice.

<sup>37</sup> Although there are no precise figures, flows from Panama to Costa Rica and from Nicaragua to Costa Rica are mainly made up of Panamanian Ngäbe Buglé and Nicaraguan Miskitos. It is estimated that there are between 15,000 and 20,000 indigenous migrants in Costa Rica, of whom at least 75 per cent are Ngäbe Buglé. (Abelardo M. Gamboa, Diego L. Montoya and Jacqueline J. Herrera, “La travesía laboral de la población Ngäbe y Buglé de Costa Rica a Panamá: características y desafíos” [The labor journey of the Ngäbe and Buglé population from Costa Rica to Panama: characteristics and challenges], report (San José, Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), 2014). Available at [https://rosanjose.iom.int/site/sites/default/files/la\\_travesia\\_laboral\\_de\\_los\\_ngabe\\_y\\_bugle\\_0.pdf](https://rosanjose.iom.int/site/sites/default/files/la_travesia_laboral_de_los_ngabe_y_bugle_0.pdf))

<sup>38</sup> Central American Integration System (SICA), IOM and UNHCR, “Hallazgos del estudio de línea base sobre migración y desplazamiento en la región del SICA” [Findings from the baseline study on migration and displacement in the SICA region], report (San José, IOM, 2019). Available at <https://rosanjose.iom.int/site/es/biblioteca/hallazgos-del-estudio-de-linea-base-sobre-migracion-y-desplazamiento-en-la-region-del-sica>

<sup>39</sup> IDMC, 2019 internal displacement figures by country, data set (accessed April 2020). Available at [www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data](http://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data).

<sup>40</sup> Itzá Castañeda Camey, Laura Sabater, Cate Owren and A. Emmett Boyer (Jamie Wen, editor), Gender-based Violence and Environment Linkages (Geneva, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), 2020). Available at <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-002-En.pdf>.

### 3.3.1. Migration to the north

The tightening of the border between Mexico and the United States, combined with limited regular migration options, is expected to continue. Mexico, traditionally a sending and transit country, has also tightened its southern border with Guatemala to stem migrant flows from Central America. This includes the deployment of the National Guard to this border.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.3.2. Venezuelans in the region

There are more than 5.1 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants outside the country.<sup>42</sup> Millions have crossed borders in the past, seeking better livelihoods to be able to meet basic needs and are increasingly exposed to abuse and exploitation, human trafficking, smuggling and violence, as well as xenophobia and discrimination. Those entering Caribbean countries often arrive through dangerous boat journeys.

Countries of the region have historically responded with great solidarity to the sizeable numbers of arriving Venezuelans. However, the COVID-19 crisis has further strained national labour markets and social services, including health care and education. This situation, combined with limited resources and gaps in local integration – including those stemming from cultural and language barriers, and lack of basic rights and documentation – can further fuel xenophobic attitudes, even as Venezuelans bring skills and talent to their new communities and contributed to employment and economic growth.

Governments in the region can be expected to extend commendable efforts to provide assistance, protection, and access to regularization and documentation to Venezuelans while ensuring harmonization in the regional response. The United Nations and its partners will continue to support government efforts through the RMRP, which addresses immediate humanitarian and protection needs while also facilitating socioeconomic integration and supporting host communities. At the political level, host governments will continue to seek solutions through the Quito Process, a State-led initiative to promote dialogue and harmonize responses to the crisis.

On 26 May 2020, the European Union and Spain, with the support of Canada, Norway, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and IOM, organized the International Conference of Donors in Solidarity with Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants. The conference resulted in donor commitments amounting to USD 2.79 billion, including USD 653 million in grants. IOM is working with UNHCR and donors to ensure follow-up to the commitments made.

For the remainder of 2020 and for 2021, the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and related border closures and movement restrictions will bring additional uncertainties and likely increase the vulnerability of migrants and refugees from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Once the borders reopen, mixed flows of Venezuelans are expected to enter and leave the country simultaneously. In the event of changes that would open opportunities for significant stabilization, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela would require a massive economic

<sup>41</sup> Roberta Rampton, Dave Graham and Diego Oré, “México desplegará 6,000 efectivos de Guardia Nacional en frontera sur como parte de acuerdo con EEUU” [Mexico to deploy 6,000 National Guard troops to the southern border as part of an agreement with the United States], *Reuters* (online), 6 June 2019; “Guerra de aranceles: México enviará 6.000 efectivos de la Guardia Nacional a la frontera con Guatemala para tratar de contener la migración” [Tariff war: Mexico will send 6,000 members of the National Guard to the border with Guatemala to try to contain migration], *BBC News* (online), 7 June 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Since 2015, over 5 million Venezuelans have left their country. Around 708,000 are currently in 10 countries and territories in the region: Aruba (17,000), Canada (20,775), Costa Rica (29,600), Curaçao (16,500), the Dominican Republic (34,000), Guyana (22,000), Mexico (73,115), Panama (120,642), Trinidad and Tobago (24,000) and the United States (351,1449) (R4V, Refugee and Migrant Response Plan 2020, database. Available at <https://r4v.info/es/situations/platform> (accessed 28 May 2020)).

reactivation plan and support for the safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration of Venezuelans, including many highly skilled ones across various economic sectors. This process will probably be drawn out, as many Venezuelans will choose to remain abroad until they are convinced of its irreversible success.

### 3.3.3. Environment and climate change

The impact of changes in the environment, including global warming, as well as disasters due to natural hazards such as storms and floods, is likely to intensify, particularly in the Caribbean and parts of Central America. Scientific evidence forecasts that increased water scarcity in drought-prone farming areas of Central America will reduce agricultural output and revenue, causing food insecurity.<sup>43</sup> In the Caribbean, predicted sea-level rise will threaten the livelihoods of island communities and compound the impact of sudden-onset hazards.<sup>44</sup> If these scenarios transpire and adequate adaptation options are lacking, pressure on vulnerable communities will grow and likely lead to internal and international environmental migration movements, including migration, displacement and planned relocation.<sup>45</sup>

### 3.3.4. Migrant smuggling

Migrant smuggling<sup>46</sup> is a major feature of the subregion, as people attempt to bypass border controls in Central America and Mexico. Along the United States–Mexico border, smuggling networks are a profitable industry overseen by international criminal groups. Smuggled migrants are known to frequently fall victim to predatory practices ranging from demands of bribes, to mass kidnapping and extortion. Migrants have also been subjected to execution, physical and sexual assault, torture and disappearance; this is especially the case in Mexico, where it has been reported<sup>47</sup> that smuggling networks are often managed by drug trafficking organizations.

Migrant smuggling has also long enabled irregular migration in and through Central American countries such as Guatemala, especially with migrants moving to the United States. Both Guatemalan nationals and international migrants transiting through Guatemala have historically heavily relied on smuggling operators, in a process locally known as *coyoterismo*, to reach their final destinations.

### 3.3.5. Labour migration

Economies globally and in the region have been seriously affected by the COVID-19 crisis. While not all consequences of the crisis can be foreseen, it has led to important losses of livelihoods of migrant workers and their families, as well as communities of origin and of destination. This will likely include direct, negative consequences on ethical recruitment and decent employment practices in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic.

In the aftermath of COVID-19, labour migration will have a vital role to play in the recovery of the region's economies. Actions supporting safe and orderly labour migration, based on the principles of ethical recruitment, will continue to prove essential to strengthening government efforts to enhance the benefits of labour migration while minimizing the

<sup>43</sup> IPCC, *Climate Change and Land* (see footnote 13).

<sup>44</sup> IOM, *Climate Change and Migration in Vulnerable Countries: A Snapshot of Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States* (Geneva, 2019). Available at [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/climate\\_change\\_and\\_migration\\_in\\_vulnerable\\_countries.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/climate_change_and_migration_in_vulnerable_countries.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> IPCC, *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate* (Geneva, 2019). Available at [www.ipcc.ch/srocc](http://www.ipcc.ch/srocc).

<sup>46</sup> IOM, *World Migration Report 2020*, pp. 111–113.

<sup>47</sup> IOM, Mexico. In: *Migrant Smuggling Data and Research: A Global Review of the Emerging Evidence Base*, Volume 2 (A. Triandafyllidou and M. McAuliffe, eds.) (Geneva, 2018). Available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/migrant-smuggling-data-and-research-global-review-emerging-evidence-base-volume-2>.

challenges that it presents in terms of governance and of the protection and inclusion of migrant workers.

The economic impact of COVID-19 is expected to reduce remittances to countries in Central America and the Caribbean,<sup>48</sup> and despite advances in mobile banking, the cost of sending remittances remains high.

### 3.3.6. Refugee resettlement

Changing policy priorities of the United States have resulted in a gradual decrease<sup>49</sup> in the overall admissions of refugees, changing designated nationalities and processing priorities under the Refugee Admission Programme. The number of refugees admitted in the fiscal year of 2020 will likely not reach the admissions target, given the restrictions and interruptions imposed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Refugee resettlement from abroad to Canada is part of the country's overall immigration programme. Canada aspires immigration levels to be around 1 per cent of its population annually, which amounts to about 340,000 immigrants each year. The Government has set targets until 2021, with the resettlement of refugees being roughly around 10 per cent of the total.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.3.7. Extraregional migrants

During the last two decades, the region has experienced an increasing number of nationals from Africa and Asia attempting to reach the United States by passing through Central America and Mexico. Extraregional migrants and the criminal smuggling networks helping them move exploit visa regimes, weak border controls and/or the fact that some countries in the region facilitate their passage. These flows represent a great challenge in terms of migration governance because African and Asian migrants are often more vulnerable due to their lack of regular migration status and its corresponding protections, along with language and cultural barriers, among others.

Given the impact of COVID-19 on travel, new arrivals of extraregional migrants on the continent will likely be limited in the short term. In the medium to longer term, once a certain level of economic activity has recovered and travel opens up again, these flows will likely resume unless stopped by concerted action.

<sup>48</sup> World Bank, "World Bank predicts sharpest decline of remittances in recent history", press release, 22 April 2020. Available at [www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharpest-decline-of-remittances-in-recent-history](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharpest-decline-of-remittances-in-recent-history).

<sup>49</sup> From 45,000 in fiscal year 2018 to 18,000 in fiscal year 2020. (United States Department of State, Report to Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2018, available at [www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Proposed-Refugee-Admissions-for-Fiscal-Year-2018.pdf](http://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Proposed-Refugee-Admissions-for-Fiscal-Year-2018.pdf); United States Department of State, Report to Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2020, available at [www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Proposed-Refugee-Admissions-for-Fiscal-Year-2018.pdf](http://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Proposed-Refugee-Admissions-for-Fiscal-Year-2018.pdf).)

<sup>50</sup> The refugee resettlement targets for the past few years have been as follows: 2016 (46,000, including Syrian refugees); 2017 (25,566), 2018 (27,000), 2019 (29,950), 2020 (31,700) and 2021 (31,700). At the time of writing, it is not clear whether Canada will be able to meet its target of refugee admissions in 2020; in addition, Canada's resettlement targets for years beyond 2021 have not yet been set by the Government.

### 3.4. REGIONAL MOBILITY REGIMES

The region has three mobility regimes seeking to foster stronger regional integration:

- (a) The [Central America-4 Free Mobility Agreement \(CA-4\)](#) is a regional treaty that establishes free movement of citizens between El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, that is, without the requirement of a passport and through expedited procedures. For nationals of other nations, the agreement also created a harmonized visa regime – in other words, a single Central American visa – to simplify movement (by land) between the four countries.

While the CA-4 treaty facilitates legal movement between the four countries, many policies regarding the rights of foreign citizens are determined at the national level in the countries' respective constitutions and migration laws. Hence, while the CA-4 may allow nationals of the participating States to move with few restrictions, the extent to which they are able to access social services, or engage in local labour markets, is still highly dependent on the individual legislation of receiving States.

- (b) The [Caribbean Community \(CARICOM\) Single Market and Economy \(CSME\)](#) permits the free movement of goods, capital and labour among its 12 member States.<sup>51</sup> It has committed, through Saint Ann's Declaration of 2019, that willing States will move towards full free movement of persons by 2021.
- (c) At the subregional level, the [Organization of Eastern Caribbean States](#)<sup>52</sup> (OECS) has created a single financial and economic space within which all factors of production, including goods, services and people, move without hindrance. Discussions have taken place around the use of the OECS free movement protocol in emergency situations such as the 2017 hurricane season.

Both the CSME and OECS have created supporting institutions to facilitate regional integration and to make movement of persons easier, and each regime has dealt with the implementation of free movement provisions differently.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

<sup>52</sup> Composed of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

<sup>53</sup> The two regimes have taken different approaches to managing intraregional migration: while the OECS opted for full free movement for all nationals of the Protocol member States, the CSME has opted for a phased approach, allowing increasing numbers of people to move freely over time. Both regimes have made progress to ensure access to and portability of social security benefits, but implementation remains uneven. Many States share concerns about the limited ability to track and vet individuals moving throughout the region. (IOM, *Free Movement of Persons in The Caribbean: Economic and Security Dimensions* (Geneva, 2019). Available at [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/free\\_movement\\_in\\_the\\_caribbean.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/free_movement_in_the_caribbean.pdf).)



# 4.

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## REGIONAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



## 4. REGIONAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES<sup>54</sup>

In response to the aforementioned developments, IOM will focus its efforts in the next four years on a set of strategic priorities clustered around three principal themes.

### 4.1. RESILIENCE

In a regional context of enormous socioeconomic disparities, occasional high levels of violence and insecurity, and environmental and climate change risks, IOM will scale up its actions to address the adverse drivers of migration and internal displacement (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Strategic priorities under the resilience pillar**

Resilience	Strategic priorities
<i>Main objective:</i> Address the adverse drivers of migration	Strengthen disaster preparedness, reduce the risk of displacement and respond to crises.
	Foster social cohesion, reduce violence, and encourage inclusive socioeconomic development in communities of origin and return.
	Facilitate the sustainable reintegration of migrants and affected populations.
	Advance adaptation to both sudden and slow-onset natural disasters, adverse effects of climate change and environment degradation.
	Reduce the costs of remittances, enhance the impact of remittances and facilitate direct diaspora engagement in development.
	Provide accessible and equitable quality health, including mental health services.
	Enhance the respect, protection and the fulfilment of the rights of migrants and assist those who are vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse, particularly women, children, youth, victims of trafficking and stranded migrants, among others.

### 4.2. MOBILITY

Innovative solutions ensure that safe, regular and orderly migration will be an essential element of the work of IOM work until 2024. They will reduce the vulnerabilities of migrants and strengthen their ability to contribute to society.

**Table 3. Strategic priorities under the mobility pillar**

Mobility	Strategic priorities
<i>Main objective:</i> Facilitate safe, regular and orderly forms of migration	Support orderly migration processes with proven, practical solutions for registering and regularizing migrants, managing their identities and combating migration fraud, as well as preventing, detecting and responding to health threats linked to migration.
	Develop flexible and innovative mobility schemes based on national development plans, labour market needs and the impact of disasters, or for purposes of family reunification, among others.
	Ensure the safe and dignified return of migrants and affected populations.

<sup>54</sup> These strategic priorities respond to the pillars described in the IOM Strategic Vision. The IOM Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and its four objectives – humanitarian response and resilience (SRF Objectives 1 and 2), mobility (SRF Objective 3) and governance (SRF Objective 4) – capture the areas highlighted in the Strategic Vision. The strategic priorities in this strategy will be tackled through coordinated cross-thematic approaches to contribute to the broader regional goals.



### 4.3. GOVERNANCE

In line with the reform of the United Nations development system and its role as the Coordinator of the United Nations Network on Migration, IOM will strengthen the impact of its work by forging strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, notably, Member States, regional organizations, processes and initiatives, and other United Nations agencies.

**Table 4. Strategic priorities under the governance pillar**

Governance	Strategic priorities
<p><i>Main objective:</i> Serving as a trusted and effective leader and partner in relevant bilateral, regional and international initiatives and processes</p>	Effectively coordinate United Nations engagement on migration at the country and regional levels, notably towards the achievement of the SDGs and the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration.
	Build new and deepen existing partnerships and create synergies with regional processes and initiatives.
	Forge strategic partnerships, especially with development actors, to enhance the scope and impact of IOM programmes and projects.
	Enhance the capacity of governments to collect, analyse and use migration and internal displacement data for evidence-based policymaking.
	Strengthening national, provincial and local governments' ability to develop and implement well-managed migration policies.





# 5.

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## INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## 5. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

To meet its strategic priorities in the next four years, IOM will strengthen its organizational effectiveness and capacity through institutional development in the following key areas:

(a) **Improve IOM's capacity to collect and analyse migration and internal displacement data**

In line with IOM's Migration Data Strategy and building on existing experiences, programmatic action and institutional tools – most notably the Regional Platform for Migration Information (PRIMI)<sup>55</sup> and the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM),<sup>56</sup> as well as the Global Migration Data Analysis Center (GMDAC) – IOM will support Member States in the timely collection and analysis of migration data. This will require essential investments in internal institutional capacity to help guide Member States. The use of the Organization's own data is also crucial to improving programming.

(b) **Strengthen the capacity to engage in regional initiatives, create synergies among them and fulfil its role as the Coordinator of the United Nations Network on Migration**

IOM leads or co-leads multiple regional migration processes and initiatives. In order to make more effective and strategic use and enhance impact, it will invest in regional engagement capacity at both programmatic and policy levels, as well as knowledge management and stakeholder interaction.

(c) **Strengthen IOM's resource mobilization capacity**

In recent years, United States government donors have provided a majority of the IOM project budget in the region. To broaden the funding base, IOM will improve engagement with other State and institutional donors, such as the European Union, Canada and Japan, as well as emerging donors, such as the private sector. Working with governments as primary partners, IOM will deepen engagement with the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB).

(d) **Strengthen the technical capacity of staff across thematic areas, as well as in administration and finance**

While IOM staff are highly knowledgeable and professional, more attention needs to be paid to the full, coherent and consistent application of institutional policies and frameworks, as well as relevant international agendas, law, standards and commitments. IOM will invest in a training series for its staff, particularly in its national offices.

<sup>55</sup> The PRIMl website is available at <https://primi.iom.int/en>.

<sup>56</sup> The Displacement Tracking Matrix is available at <https://dtm.iom.int>.

(e) **Strengthen strategic communication**

In a decentralized, projectized organization, strategic communication and leadership in migration issues is critical in order for IOM to gain visibility and position at the regional level and beyond. Building on existing work, IOM will further invest in this area, in coordination with Headquarters.

(f) **Expand knowledge management**

Thanks to its operational experience, IOM has gathered significant know-how and best practices and has begun making them available on the Regional Knowledge Hub.<sup>57</sup> The Western Hemisphere Regional Migration Program also shares its best practices with other regional migration programmes through the Knowledge Management Project operated by the IOM mission in Washington, D.C. In the coming years, IOM will ensure that this collective experience will systematically benefit Member States, other United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations, regional processes and initiatives, civil society, migrants and communities, with a focus on advancing the implementation of the SDGs, and, as applicable, the Global Compact for Migration, through the global Knowledge Platform and Connection Hub, which will have regional and national sections.

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<sup>57</sup> The Regional Knowledge Hub is available at <https://kmhub.iom.int>.

# ANNEX 1. IOM IN CENTRAL AMERICA, NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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## **The work of IOM in the region**

Through programming, policy, research and partnerships, IOM covers the following thematic areas in the region:

- (a) Disaster prevention, preparedness and response;
- (b) Post-crisis transition and recovery;
- (c) Refugee resettlement;
- (d) Migration, environment and climate change;
- (e) Protection and assistance for vulnerable migrants;
- (f) Safe and dignified assisted voluntary return and sustainable reintegration;
- (g) Migration health, including mental health and psychosocial support;
- (h) Labour mobility and human development;
- (i) Counter-trafficking;
- (j) Immigration and border management.

IOM also engages in several regional processes and initiatives (see Annex 2). It initiates and fosters discussions on timely migration issues, carries out research, and collects and shares data and insights from its operational experience in the field through its website, social media channels and the Regional Knowledge Hub on Migration.

## IOM offices and staff in the region

Regional Office (San Jose, Costa Rica)		
<b>Offices and sub-offices in countries and territories</b>	<b>Country Office with Resource Mobilization Functions</b>	<b>Office of the Director General's Special Envoy for the Response to the Venezuelan Situation</b>
Aruba (Oranjestad)	United States (Washington, D.C.)	
Bahamas (Nassau)		Panama (Panama City)
Belize (Belize City)	<b>Country Office with Coordinating Functions for the Caribbean</b>	
Canada (Ottawa)		<b>Panama (Global) Administrative Centre</b>
Costa Rica (San José)	Guyana (Georgetown)	Panama (Panama City)
Cuba (Havana)		
Curaçao (Willemstad)	<b>Staff presence</b>	<b>Special Liaison Office to the United Nations</b>
Dominica (Roseau)	Grenada (Saint George's)	United States (New York City)
Dominican Republic (Santo Domingo, Dajabón, Elias Piña, Jimaní, Pedernales)		
El Salvador (San Salvador)		
Guatemala (Guatemala City, San Marcos, Quetzaltenango)		
Haiti (Port-au-Prince, Ouanaminthe, Port-de-Paix)		
Honduras (Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula)		
Jamaica (Kingston)		
Mexico (Mexico City, Ciudad Juárez, Tapachula, Tenosique, Tijuana)		
Nicaragua (Managua, Chinandega, Rivas)		
Panama (Panama City)		
Trinidad and Tobago (Port of Spain)		

  

IOM staff in the region	Number*
General service	649
National officers	76
Professional staff	121
<b>Total</b>	<b>846</b>

Note: \* Numbers are as of 31 December 2019.

The [Regional Office in San José](#) oversees, plans, coordinates and supports IOM activities in the region. It formulates regional strategies, guides their implementation, coordinates regional action plans, and provides programmatic support in areas such as project development, project endorsement, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, resource mobilization, and resource management to the country offices in the region. In addition, the Regional Office implements regional projects of strategic importance and liaises and coordinates with regional and subregional processes and initiatives, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental bodies and other key partners.

[Offices and sub-offices in countries and territories](#) implement a wide range of projects addressing specific migration needs. These offices keep abreast of and analyse migration issues and emerging trends in the country in order to develop appropriate responses and contribute to regional strategies and planning.

The [Canada Country Office](#) has principal responsibilities relating to Canada's Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Programme.

The [Country Office with Resource Mobilization Functions in Washington, D.C.](#) has the responsibility of resource mobilization by assisting in fundraising activities, as well as providing advice on fundraising policies, priorities and procedures.

The [Country Office with Coordinating Functions for the Caribbean](#) in Guyana helps address migration issues and emerging trends in the region and directs project development in the context of regional strategies, policies and consultative processes. It provides administrative and technical support to smaller offices and liaises with subregional entities. It also serves as the Country Office for Guyana.

The [Office of the Director General's Special Envoy \(OSE\) for the Regional Response to the Venezuelan Situation](#) is responsible for the coordination of project implementation and fundraising for the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP). The OSE provides support to country platforms in the operationalization of regional and national strategies, information management, communication and resource mobilization. Its mandate covers the 17 host countries of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, as well as the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela itself. The Special Envoy is responsible for political liaison, implementation and oversight of IOM response. He also co-chairs the Inter-Agency Regional Platform, co-coordinates the technical secretariat of the Quito Process and supports the mandate of the IOM-UNHCR Joint Special Representative. The OSE was established given the complexity of the political and humanitarian contexts, regional scope, and the developmental impact of the crisis on receiving countries and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela itself.

The [Panama \(Global\) Administrative Centre \(PAC\)](#) supports country and regional Offices in the Western hemisphere and other regions of the world. PAC services include human resources, training, health and medical insurance, legal, accounting and finance, information and communications technology, security, internal audit and emergency, and post-crisis support.

The [Special Liaison Office in New York](#) strengthens IOM's relations with the United Nations, specific multilateral bodies, diplomatic missions and NGOs. The Special Liaison Office also coordinates, guides and advises IOM offices worldwide on policies, programming and funding with respect to a wide range of multi-donor trust funds based in New York.



## ANNEX 2. OVERVIEW OF PROCESSES AND INITIATIVES IN CENTRAL AMERICA, NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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While maintaining links with all regional initiatives, IOM will prioritize engagement with the following regional processes and initiatives where it has been recognized as an indispensable actor and that are of fundamental importance for addressing the challenges of migration and realizing its benefits:

- Regional United Nations Network on Migration for Latin America and the Caribbean
- Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) (“Puebla Process”)
- Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC)
- Central American Commission of Migration Directors (OCAM)
- Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants (R4V)
- Action Plan for the Comprehensive Management of Migration in the Countries of the Central American Integration System (PAIM-SICA)
- Comprehensive Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico (CPD)
- Issue-based Coalition on Human Mobility
- Joint Initiative on Health and Migration (INCOSAMI)

## Regional processes and initiatives

Name	Lead	Remarks
<b>United Nations Global Compact for Migration</b>		
Regional United Nations Network on Migration for Latin America and the Caribbean	IOM and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)	IOM and ECLAC are leading the regional review and have agreed to establish a regional network.
<b>Inter-State consultation mechanisms</b>		
Regional Conference on Migration (RCM)	Member States	IOM is an observer organization and provides vital technical, administrative and financial support, particularly for specific activities.
Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC)	Member States	IOM and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provide key technical and logistical support; space to convene regional thematic networks on key migration issues. The CMC is expected to be formally adopted by Member States as a regional consultative process in 2021.
Central American Commission of Migration Directors (OCAM)	Member States of the Central American Integration System (SICA)	IOM is the technical secretariat and also provides financial support to the OCAM Secretariat.
Ibero-American Network of Migration Authorities (RIAM)	Migration authorities of member States	IOM is an observer organization and the Technical Secretariat.
Council of Ministers of Women's Affairs of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA)	Member States	IOM supports COMMCA on a range of relevant areas, such as women and migration, trafficking in persons, and violence against women.
Joint Initiative on Health and Migration (INCOSAMI)	Migration and health authorities of Member States	IOM is in the Steering Committee with other United Nations and Member State partners and provides technical coordination support.
Ibero-American Forum on Migration and Development (FIBEMYD)	Member States	IOM is an observer.
Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS)	Member States	IOM is an observer.

Name	Lead	Remarks
<b>Regional initiatives addressing migration and displacement</b>		
Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants (R4V)	IOM and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	IOM is a key actor supporting governments and Venezuelan refugees and migrants.
Action Plan for the Comprehensive Management of Migration in the Countries of the Central American Integration System (PAIM-SICA)	Secretary-General of SICA and Member States	IOM provides essential technical and financial support in developing the action plan and kick-starting its five-year implementation upon approval by the presidents of SICA countries.
Comprehensive Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico (CDP)	ECLAC	IOM and UNHCR co-lead Pillar 4 on the comprehensive management of the migration cycle and contribute to other pillars.
Joint Initiative on Violence Reduction in the Northern Countries of Central America	UNICEF and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNSDG-LAC)	
America Crece	United States Government initiative to catalyse private sector investment in infrastructure in Latin America and the Caribbean	The initiative could serve as the private sector channel of the CDP to facilitate private sector investments in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico.
Issue-based Coalition (IBC) on Human Mobility (among other IBCs)	IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF	Seeks to promote more coherent and aligned regional or subregional approaches to human mobility.
Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS)	State-led initiative supported by UNHCR	IOM participates in the annual high-level meeting.
Regional Coalition against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (CORETT)	Member States	Technically focused regional network; IOM supports and participates in the actions of CORETT through multiple projects.
Conference on Comprehensive Disaster Management for the Caribbean	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA)	IOM supports the integration of the displacement and Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) elements in situations of natural disasters.
Regional Group on Risks, Emergencies and Disasters for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC)	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)	IOM is a member of REDLAC, including of several of its subgroups.



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