

A group of migrants, seen from behind, are walking along a set of railroad tracks that curve into the distance. They are carrying backpacks and some have items draped over their heads. The background features a lush green valley and a range of mountains under a clear sky. A tall metal tower stands on the left side of the tracks.

North and Central American Task Force on Migration

An initiative of the World Refugee & Migration Council

Elizabeth Ferris, March 2022

wrmcouncil.org/taskforce

The idea

- Too many Central Americans are forced to leave their homes in search of protection.
- While the US-Mexico border has been a contentious flash point for years, all countries in the region are affected and all must play a role in resolving the crisis.

So, the World Refugee & Migration Council decided to organize a task force of knowledgeable, committed people from North and Central America to put their heads together and come up with creative ways of tackling the issue.

The people

Task Force Co-chairs

- **Secretary Madeleine Albright** [**In Memoriam**], former US Secretary of State; Honorary Chair, World Refugee & Migration Council
- **Honourable Lloyd Axworthy**, Chair, World Refugee & Migration Council, former Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs
- **Lic. Mayu Brizuela de Avila**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, El Salvador
- **Dr. Julieta Castellanos**, Former Rector, National Autonomous University of Honduras
- **Fr. Leonir Chiarello**, Superior General, Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles (Scalabrinians)
- **President Laura Chinchilla**, former President of Costa Rica
- **Dr. Silvia Giorguli Saucedo**, President, El Colegio de México
- **Cardinal Álvaro Ramazzini**, Bishop of Huehuetenango, Guatemala

And 30 other engaged, committed representatives of civil society and academia as well as high-ranking former political leaders

The process

- 6 **thematic areas** for intensive work: humanitarian protection in the region, regional cooperation & co-responsibility, political and institutional drivers of migration, economic and environmental drivers, alternative migration pathways, and integration/narratives
- **Consulted** widely with governments, academics and civil society, including faith-based organizations
- Commissioned 12 **research papers** to support the work (available [here](#))
- Debated issues & draft **recommendations** in working groups over the course of 6 months
- Produced five **interim reports** (available [here](#))

The high-level takeaways

- A comprehensive, strategic, regional approach is needed to address migration from Northern Central America. No one country can deal with the complexities of this migration on its own.
- Governments in Northern Central America must address the political, economic and institutional drivers of migration. There are no quick fixes to address the drivers of migration; fundamental political, institutional and economic change is necessary.
- The United States, Canada and Mexico must increase legal channels for Central Americans to migrate — through both labor migration and protection pathways.
- All regional actors — from Central American governments to donors, international NGOs and financial institutions — must find ways to support the active engagement of civil society



Developing a comprehensive, strategic regional approach to Central American migration

- **Recommendation 1:** We recommend the establishment of a North and Central American Council on Migration, based on the model of the Arctic Council, to serve as a forum for strategic discussions concerning Central American migration and to coordinate concrete actions. The Council should have a rotating chair and include representatives of migrant communities, civil society organizations, academics and the private sector as full participants.

Protecting women, children, indigenous populations and the internally displaced in northern Central America

■ Recommendation 2.

We suggest that women's organizations and networks in Mexico and Central America take the lead in organizing a regional network meeting within the next year with a view to developing a consortium of organizations to take the lead in identifying and implementing priority actions to protect women and children in the region.





- **Recommendation 3.** Recognizing the potential value of a regional system of **child protection**, we call on UNICEF, together with child-centered NGOs and UNHCR's Safe Spaces Network, to convene a meeting with stakeholders in the region to examine both governmental and community-led mechanisms for upholding the rights of children, including those at risk of displacement and migrant and displaced children.
- **Recommendation 4.** We call on national governments, donors and regional actors to provide adequate financial and political **support for asylum**, to support innovations for asylum-seekers and refugees such as the internal relocation program in Mexico, and to adopt and implement policies on internal displacement. These policies should be based on international standards.

Developing alternative migration pathways

- **Recommendation 5.** The US, Canada and Mexico should use bilateral and multilateral agreements to increase labor migration pathways from Central America by at least 50,000 in the next two years...and should coordinate their labor migration policies.
- **Recommendation 6.** The United States and Canada should expand all protection pathways available to Central Americans, including refugee pathways, complementary protection, parole and other forms of temporary protection. This expansion should be based on a review of available mechanisms and eligibility criteria.



Tackling political-institutional drivers of migration

- **Recommendation 7.** We support and urge donors to support civil society initiatives and academics working against corruption and identifying bottlenecks in their judicial system and to provide protection to those human rights defenders calling out their governments for corruption. We urge that steps be taken now to establish an international anti-corruption court.
- **Recommendation 8.** We urge governments in Northern Central America, with the support of other regional actors to implement bold policies to professionalize and root out corruption in the security forces and to prioritize reforms in their penitentiary systems.



Enhancing economic opportunities in northern Central America

- **Recommendation 9.** We recommend organizing an **international conference** with academics, policy-makers, civil society groups and representatives of international financial institutions to consider measures to launch an ambitious new initiative to address the structural inequities and forces that compel people to migrate.
- **Recommendation 10.** We recommend that governments and other stakeholders lower the barriers to formalization of informal enterprises, especially for micro or informal businesses led by women and young people.
- **Recommendation 11.** We urge governments to prepare for assisting environmental migrants in both slow and sudden onset scenarios, recognizing that migration can be part of the solution.



A photograph of a group of people, including a young girl in the foreground holding a small American flag. They are standing in front of a large American flag. The scene appears to be a public event or ceremony. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Changing the narrative and promoting integration

- **Recommendation 12:** We urge all stakeholders – governments, civil society, the private sector, regional and international organizations – develop a common understanding of migration and its positive benefits

And now what?

- The hard work of advocating for these changes with governments, regional and international organizations, the private sector, civil society, academics and other stakeholders in the region.
- Some of the recommendations can be implemented now. Some will require more time.
- There are no quick fixes. Political commitment is needed.

Thank you!

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More information:

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