



BRAZIL

High Level Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and
Migrants

Roundtable 4

Statement by H.E. Alexandre de Moraes,
Minister of Justice and Citizenship

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(Please check against delivery)

Mr President,

The discussion regarding a Global Compact on Responsibility Sharing for Refugees stems from the perception that, despite the global nature of forced displacement, the impact associated with the admission of refugees has not been evenly distributed across countries. Data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees indicates that developing countries have disproportionately taken this burden and currently host 86% of all refugees – or even 90%, if Palestinian refugees are also taken into account.

A balanced sharing of responsibilities therefore calls for two kinds of action: to help host countries in the developing world to ensure that these countries can guarantee basic rights for refugees; and to expand admission channels so that a proportion of refugees currently in overloaded developing countries can seek protection elsewhere. These courses of action are complementary.

We must be cautious regarding the possibility that the provision of financial support to humanitarian agencies or refugee-hosting countries could serve, in some cases, to compensate for the adoption of policies that restrict the entrance of asylum seekers. We should welcome the involvement of international financial institutions in assisting refugees, including the World Bank. However, we should also ensure that this support does not reduce the availability of resources to initiatives aimed at promoting the development of recipient countries.

Mr President,

The future Global Compact should not be a mere operational arrangement between countries. It should focus on the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers and on the reaffirmation of their rights, particularly the principle of “non refoulement”, which Brazil strictly follows. Emerging practices in response to large movements of refugees or protracted refugee situations, such as agreements on voluntary transfer and repatriation, should always respect international refugee law.

Since current trends point towards an increase in the number of forced displacements, our greatest challenge consists of being prepared to receive new inflows and to ensure their access to the labour market, the education system and health services. In Brazil, these rights are guaranteed to all asylum seekers from the moment they apply for refugee status in our territory. We are working to enhance the assistance we provide to asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons, through the opening of reception centres in some regional capitals and the establishment of partnerships with civil society, for which we will soon allocate about 400 thousand dollars.

Mr President,

In 2014, Latin America and the Caribbean took a major step by adopting the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action, during the Cartagena+30 Conference, held in Brasilia, in celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration. The 1984 Cartagena Declaration was a milestone towards expanding the refugee definition beyond the scope of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. In the same vein, the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action also addresses situations that go beyond the boundaries of the Convention, including displacement caused by disasters and by organized crime.

In our view, the conceptual advances achieved in Latin America and the Caribbean could be a source of inspiration for the international community. There is sufficient critical mass and experience for the future Global Compact to address new concepts and to deepen the debate on complementary protection, which is relevant in increasingly complex contexts.

Mr President,

Over the past five years, the number of asylum requests received by the Brazilian government grew more than 2,000%. Our refugee population currently totals 9 thousand people from 79 different nationalities. It is estimated to grow by nearly 60% by the end of 2017, when we expect to have 5,300 additional recognized refugees. Our humanitarian visa policy in favour of people affected by the conflict in Syria remains in force and has benefited more than 2,300 Syrians already recognized as refugees by the Brazilian government.

In 2017, we will also earmark about 160 thousand dollars for our resettlement program, which will include refugees from Colombia and from the Northern Triangle of Central America, with a particular focus on women and girls who are victims of violence. For the first time since its inception, our resettlement program, previously financed with the assistance of UNHCR, will receive Brazilian government resources.

Mr President,

The future Global Compact cannot overlook the causes of forced displacement around the world, often associated with conflict and persecution. The humanitarian tragedy endured by the 65 million refugees and internally displaced people calls for our collective responsibility for the peaceful settlement of conflicts as well as the observance of international humanitarian law, especially the rules that protect civilians. Should we fail in this commitment, we will not be able to forsake the duty of protecting people at risk of violence when they flee their countries and knock on our doors to seek safety.

Thank you.