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General debate

Statement by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

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In Latin America and the Caribbean, practically all countries are part of migratory cycles, whether as countries of origin, destination, return or transit. The United States remains the main migration destination, although several South American countries have attracted many migrants. Migration cycles in the region are explained both by push factors –such as the structural lack of decent work opportunities, which has become dramatic with the COVID-19 crisis, as well as violence, environmental disasters and the effects of climate change– and pull factors –based on greater opportunities for employment, better wages and family reunification–.

The challenges posed by migration require responses based on a comprehensive view of sustainable development and the obligation of States to protect human rights, without any distinction of gender, age, origin, ethnicity or migratory condition. These challenges must be addressed multilaterally and indeed most of the States in our region fully support the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The regional review of the Pact took place in April 2021, at a meeting co-organized by ECLAC and IOM, with the broad participation of different social actors.

In order to achieve safe, orderly and regular migration, a regional perspective is needed, establishing joint responsibilities between States and taking into account the complete migratory cycle and the conditions and processes of departure, transit and destination of migrants. Regularization processes should be facilitated, to allow migrants to access employment and social services. Furthermore, it is necessary to combat xenophobia and discrimination towards the migrant population.

At the ECLAC we firmly believe that migration should be an informed and free option, and not a necessity imposed by poverty and suffering. It is thus urgent to implement strategies, policies and projects that pursue sustainable development with equality at the center. An example from our region is the Comprehensive Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and south-southeast Mexico (PDI), which addresses the structural causes of irregular migration, emphasizing peace, development, regional integration, multilateralism, international cooperation and respect for the sovereignty of States.

The PDI proposes four pillars -economic development, social welfare, response to climate change and comprehensive management of the migratory cycle- organized in 15 thematic programs and 114 projects ready to be launched, with an investment of approximately 45 billion dollars in a period of five years. By promoting sustainability and resilience, the PDI addresses the causes of irregular human mobility from a development and integration perspective.