

CANADA

**Special Meeting on the Inter-American Program for the Promotion and Protection of the Human Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families**

**March 16, 2006**

Canada appreciates this opportunity to reflect on our engagement on migration and refugee related issues in the Hemisphere over the past year.

Canada strongly advocates the need for legal, orderly, well-managed migration systems that incorporate respect for the human rights of migrants. It is clear that legal migration paths provide greater protection for migrants. Irregular migration fosters vulnerability, risk, and abuse and Canada staunchly advocates efforts to combat the transnational crimes of migrant smuggling and human trafficking. Indeed, we have a network of Migration Integrity Officers who work in our embassies abroad to identify trends, disrupt irregular migration movements and provide training on ways to identify fraud. We also encourage all States, who have not yet signed or have signed and not yet ratified, to ratify and implement the UN Convention on Transnational Crime and its Protocols.

In the Hemisphere, Canada was pleased to participate in the regional hearing for the Americas of the Global Commission on International Migration that was held in Mexico in May 2005. During this hearing, Canada presented a Canadian Submission to the Global Commission putting forward our approach to migration management and stressing the need for all States to take responsibility for managing the movements of people and engaging in constructive international dialogue that recognizes common interests and challenges in addressing these movements.

Canada values its participation in the 11 year-old Regional Conference on Migration (with Mexico, Central America, the USA, and the Dominican Republic) and was pleased to have acted as President-Pro-Tempore in 2005. Also known as the Puebla Process, it brings states together to address issues from the perspective of common interests and concerns and to look for areas where cooperation and coordination are possible. Canada sees this regional consultative process as a model of successful international cooperation in the area of migration. That success is due in large measure to the commitment of the participating states who come to the table in the spirit of constructive engagement, effective cooperation initiatives, and tangible results. (NOTE: El Salvador as current PPT of RCM may speak to some of the concrete activities over past year - IOM-ICAO workshop on travel document standards; workshop to consider guidelines for repatriation of child victims of trafficking.)

On the specific subject of human trafficking, Canada has taken numerous steps in the last year to enhance our response domestically, regionally, and internationally.

In keeping with the obligations of the UN Trafficking Protocol, Canada enacted two important pieces of legislation in 2005 that better reflect the nature of this practice and which will significantly improve our ability to protect the vulnerable from this terrible crime. Our Criminal Code was amended to include three new specific offences to better combat human trafficking by specifically prohibiting: trafficking in persons; the receiving of a financial or other material benefit

from the trafficking of a person; and the withholding or destruction of a person's travel or identification document for the purpose of committing a trafficking offence. Canada also amended its laws to better protect vulnerable victims/witnesses, including trafficking victims, by expanding the use of testimonial aids, such as screens, closed-circuit television, and support persons. These will assist victims in providing their views and concerns in proceedings against their traffickers.

Regionally, Canada is participating in the OAS meeting in Venezuela this week of Authorities on Trafficking in Persons.

Canada provided support to trafficking prevention and awareness-raising efforts in the region through partnerships with NGOs and multilateral organizations. For example, through our Human Security Program, we are supporting a regional workshop next week in Costa Rica under the auspices of the IOM to promote awareness of trafficking in persons issues to high-level media and government representatives and develop awareness products for dissemination in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. The Canadian International Development Agency has also recently provided anti-trafficking funding support in Nicaragua and Peru.

Canada provided support to a civil society organization in Costa Rica (CIDEHUM) to organize workshops in Central America with the aim of raising awareness and preventing human rights violations of irregular migrants, particularly in the context of human smuggling and trafficking.

In the context of refugee protection and support for the work of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), Canadian officials and civil society representatives participated in the First Meeting on Solidarity Resettlement in the Americas in Quito, Ecuador in February and offered to share our experience in building refugee resettlement capacity with regional governments.

We are also pleased to note today some work that has taken place in the context of the Commission for Labour Cooperation of the North American Agreement on Labour Cooperation (NAFTA side agreement). Under the direction of the Ministers of Labour of Canada, the U.S. and Mexico, the Commission has published a Guide to Employment and Labour Laws for Migrant Workers. This guide was developed to help educate migrant workers on their rights in the three North American countries. Copies are being distributed to workers participating in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. The guide is available in English, French, and Spanish and is available on the NAALC website ([www.naalc.org](http://www.naalc.org)).

The year ahead also promises to be an important one that will bring more attention to migrant workers and to the linkages between people movements and development. As we all know, the UN will be holding a two-day High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development at the beginning of the General Assembly in September. Canada sees this as an opportunity for open, constructive exchange that focuses on how managed migration can contribute to development, particularly the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Canada also sees value in the schedule of events leading up to September that are giving specific attention to the High Level Dialogue and providing opportunities for consideration of particular issues and perspectives.

In December, Canada was pleased to participate in an event organized by Mexico along with the UN Economic Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC-CEPAL), the Population Fund and the Population Division that turned attention to international migration and development issues in this region.

Canadian officials participated in a session this month in New York at the Commission on the Status of Women that looked at the gender dimensions of international migration. Officials and a representative of civil society also participated in a multi-stakeholder dialogue that looked at the crime of trafficking in persons from the perspective of Violence against Women.

We will also be actively participating in the ECLAC meeting in Montevideo, Uruguay, next week and the Commission on Population and Development in New York in April that will be addressing issues of population, migration, and development.

With regard to concrete activities geared specifically towards the situation of temporary migrant workers, Canada is actively looking at the possibility of organizing a workshop on migrant workers within the context of the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour (IACML), if funding is available.