



Jesuit Migration Network of Central America and North America Calls Upon Governments in Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America to Adopt Holistic Approach

June 13, 2017—As a network of Jesuit works and institutions in Central America, Mexico, the United States and Canada that accompanies migrants, refugees, and displaced populations, studies the causes that drive migration and its effects, and promotes policies that honor the human rights of these groups, today we express our deep concern regarding the Conference on Prosperity and Security. **We are concerned that this conference**, convened by the governments of the United States and Mexico, and held with the participation of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, **will address prosperity from a lens that is purely economic and informed by the private sector, and that it will address security with an approach that ignores human rights and further militarizes borders.**

More dialogue, less repression, more investment in social programs

We value the private sector's interest in working to address the great challenges our countries face; however, we believe that other sectors of civil society should be represented in this discussion. We fear that the focus of this conference will not address the structural problems that the countries in the Northern Triangle of Central America face. Rather than contributing to the development of these countries, and reducing forced migration from them, we are concerned that it will lead to policies that increasingly repress and militarize in the name of security. We maintain that supporting repressive, military approaches are not a solution to migration. Investing in our countries' security forces, with their weaknesses and corruption, can result in increased risk and harm for the people of our countries. Rather than addressing the root causes of migration, these approaches increase the vulnerability of communities.

Therefore, **we believe that the commitment of our governments should be to increase funding for social programs, including education, health, and social protection systems, and that the economic support we receive from the United States should focus on supporting these efforts in addressing the structural causes of migration.**



We believe that economic growth and prosperity will only be possible if investments in the social sector are strengthened, because when these areas are strong, vulnerable populations can more fully access the rights they are entitled to. Policies driven by private sector investment fall short of responding to these needs. We are aware that in addition to prioritizing these areas, we are in need of institution strengthening for our governments; effective anti-corruption efforts; more just tax systems; the elimination of fiscal incentives; and increased transparency of public and private investments.

International protection: inescapable and shared responsibility

Additionally, we are concerned by the United States' and Mexico's efforts to stem the migration of those fleeing their countries in search of protection. It has been recognized that Central America suffers the effects of deep challenges that do not emerge solely from within these countries, but rather are the result of international issues such as organized crime, drug trafficking, and gangs who are often used by these criminal groups. **Providing international protection for those fleeing violence is therefore a shared responsibility among the nation states that comprise this region.**

Policies that have been put in place since 2014, such as the Southern Border Plan, only increase the vulnerability of migrants in the face of these groups. Similarly, the detention of migrants by migration authorities and armed forces, prone to corruption and abuse, increases the vulnerability of migrants and refugees. None of these policies reduces migration; they only increase vulnerability and violence. Improving conditions in countries of origin by increasing human security and well-being is what will lessen the flow of migrants.

We call upon the governments of Mexico and the United States to uphold their responsibilities in providing international protection to those fleeing violence; this is a moral obligation as well as a responsibility under international human rights conventions. We ask all of the participating governments to recognize the complexity of the situations being fled, to open spaces for dialogue about these situations, and to seek solutions together. And we call upon them to ensure that amidst conversation on private sector investment and security, they not lose sight of their responsibility to uphold human rights.

“Christian compassion—this ‘suffering with’ compassion—is expressed first of all in the commitment to obtain knowledge of the events that force people to leave their homeland, and where necessary, to give voice to those who cannot manage to make their cry of distress and oppression heard.

They are all elements that dehumanize and must push every Christian and the whole community to concrete attention.”

—Pope Francis

Jesuit Migration Network of Central America and North America (RJM-CANA) is a collaboration of institutions of the Society of Jesus in Central America, Mexico, the United States and Canada, which promotes work committed to migrants, displaced people, refugees and their families and other actors of change in the defense of migrant/refugee rights in countries of origin, transit, destination and return. The Network maintains that everyone has the right to dignity and humane treatment as they live, work and self-actualize in their point or country of origin. But when this is not possible, people have the right to seek a better life away from their point of origin, either within their country or across international borders.

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