

Speech of the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Edgardo Riveros, at the XV South American Conference on Migration

Director General of the International Organization for Migration, Mr. William Swing,

Delegates from the member states of the South American Conference on Migration, authorities of the International Organization for Migration, representatives of ministries and other government agencies of the country:

Today we are convened by the XV South American Conference on Migration, whose topic is “With Justice and Equality towards Migration Governance”. On this occasion, this regional consultative process will address themes in connection with migrants’ access to justice, the dynamic relationship between migration and city, and the updating of the Conference mandates, as new themes proposed by Chile, in its capacity as Presidency Pro Tempore.

Chile reaffirms before the community of South America its vocation to reach a common ground and vision to jointly address the challenges posed by migration through a human rights-based approach, focusing our attention on the comprehensive development of migrants and the members of their families, and the countries where they live.

Over the past few years, international migration has gained significant relevance both in the mass media and in academic and governmental environments, considering the complex reality we are facing nowadays.

Large humanitarian crises have forced thousands of people to migrate from their countries of origin in search of security, peace, and new opportunities across the globe.

Based on figures from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) from 2013, there are about 232 million migrants. For 2050, a total of 405 international migrants is estimated, which calls for building effective and efficient migration management and coordination mechanisms at the global, regional, and national level.

Said figures will probably change over the coming years, considering the crises and situations of forced human mobility which in the past few weeks have produced painful images of families desperately trying to flee from the chaos reigning in their countries of origin to find security in the Old Continent.

We take this opportunity to express our solidarity with the families of the victims and all the people who have been forced to leave their

countries in search of peace and security for their families, assuming great risks. For it is mankind itself that has drowned, efficient and long-lasting responses are required.

At this very moment, Europe is facing highly complex times, considering that, based on UNHCR figures, only in 2015 more than 300 thousand people have risked their lives to cross the Mediterranean, of which more than 2,600 died during the crossing, including little Aylan, whose story and image went all over the world and shocked us.

We are in the presence of a refugee crisis, rather than just a migration phenomenon, considering that a large number of the people who decide to leave their country are doing it in an attempt to save their lives.

The aforesaid helps us establish a clear difference. A refugee is a person who flees armed conflict or persecution. A migrant is someone who decides to move, not because of direct persecution or death threat, but to improve their life based on better job and education opportunities, to join their family, among other reasons. However, certain processes can be called “mixed”, as both factors concur.

The aforementioned situation involving a progressive increase in migration flows is highly complex, in terms of both human rights and the challenge posed to the countries of destination of those people.

Said challenge is the result of the tension existing between people's right to settle where they choose and States' right to limit or regulate harbouring conditions based on their sovereignty, which tension becomes even stronger when events of humanitarian crisis, like the ones previously mentioned, take place.

From a future migration reality perspective, it is critical for this issue to get included in the United Nations Post-2015 Agenda, a space where the Human Rights approach should consolidate and be projected as an indisputable key principle for migration issues.

The American continent is not alien to the challenges posed by migration flows outside and within the region and between regions. According to IOM, there are around 57.5 million migrants through the continent, of which 50 million are in North America and the remaining ones in countries that are members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC, by its Spanish acronym).

In our country, we have seen an exponential increase in immigration since the middle of the 19th century, a time when the number of

immigrants in Chile fell short of 20 thousand people, exceeding 132 thousand in the 20th century, and reaching about 477 thousand nowadays.

In addition, from the emigration side, our nationals living abroad amount to 900 thousand people approximately, based on records of the Directorate for Chilean Communities Abroad (DICOEX, by its Spanish acronym), with whom multiple challenges remain to be addressed in terms of establishing links, partnerships, and cooperation for the development of Chile.

The aforesaid has been included and planned in the 2014-2018 Governance Programme of President Michelle Bachelet. Under said Programme, international migration is conceived among the priorities of the foreign policy of Chile. From this perspective, three areas that penetrate the national migration policy, regulations and institutional structure in their current process of definition and implementation have been assumed:

The application of the international instruments on Human Rights and the rights of migrants and the members of their families, ratified and accessed by Chile;

The principles and guidelines agreed at the South American Conference on Migration (SACM);

An active role of Chile in terms of actions related to human resettlement, regular residence, protection of victims of smuggling and trafficking in persons, and migrants' rights, among others.

To crystallise the aforementioned areas in practice, the following criteria have been established to address them:

First, the updating and modernization of the regulations applied to migration processes in the country, consolidating the access to rights and reforming the visa regime and the current institutional structure related to migration.

Second, the design and implementation of a policy for establishing links and a participatory relationship with nationals living abroad, and encouraging their civic participation through their right to vote.

Finally, the design and implementation of public policies for different international instruments for migration governance, multicultural integration, the enforcement of rights and their participation in the development of migrants.

The areas of interest defined and the action criteria have already been expressed in the actions carried out by the administration of President Bachelet.

Progress has been made in connection with the Act for the Vote of Chileans Abroad (*Ley de Voto de Chilenos en el exterior*), which was enacted in April of 2014 and will come into force in 2017 enabling Chilean nationals living abroad to vote at primaries and presidential elections, apart from national referendums, which helps settle part of a debt that our country has with them.

I appreciate your attention and hope that this space for dialogue yields results in favour of our migrants.

Thank you very much.