

IOM, UNHCR and the Government of the Bahamas Host Caribbean Regional Conference on the Protection of Vulnerable Migrants - Government officials from 19 Caribbean States and Territories, along with representatives from civil society and international and regional organizations, are gathering this week in Nassau, The Bahamas, for a Caribbean Regional Conference on the Protection of Vulnerable Migrants: Promoting Cooperation and Identification of Good Practices, organized by IOM and UNHCR.

The two-day event, beginning Wednesday, 22 May, aims to promote regional cooperation and dialogue, to identify good practices in managing mixed migration flows in the Caribbean and to examine the protection of those traveling within mixed flows. Such flows often consist of asylum-seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied minors, and economic migrants who use the same travel methods and routes, whether originating from within or outside the region.

“In the Caribbean as elsewhere, migrants are increasingly moving from, through and within the region. The new complexities of these flows require innovative and collective approaches to migration management while protecting the most vulnerable,” noted Robert Paiva, IOM Regional Director for Central and North America and the Caribbean.

The Caribbean’s migration context is complex, with strong flows to, within and from the region. The inflows are from East Asia, Africa, and South America, mainly destined for Aruba, Antigua, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Curaçao, St. Maarten, and Trinidad and Tobago. There are also significant intra-regional flows, from Guyana to Barbados, from Jamaica to Antigua, and from the Dominican Republic to Trinidad. Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom are the main destination countries for most outflows from the Caribbean.

The Conference will focus on a range of mixed migration issues of common concern such as the collection of data and analysis of migration profiles within the context of natural disasters and mobility; protection-sensitive entry systems; rescue at sea operations, interception and disembarkation; identification and protection of victims of trafficking and other vulnerable groups; and solutions for refugees and other vulnerable groups, including voluntary return and reintegration.

Presentations and plenary discussions will offer the 100 participants a forum to exchange information, experiences and good practices in responding to the challenges nationally and regionally.

Through the Conference’s discussions, it is expected that participants identify country-specific initiatives that assist Governments in responding to these challenges in a protection-sensitive manner with the support of IOM, UNHCR, and other international partners and donors.

“There is a positive spectrum of good practices relating to the protection of vulnerable persons in mixed migration flows in the Caribbean worthy of highlighting. It is our hope that these practices will be further developed and replicated throughout the region,” stated Shelly Pitterman, UNHCR Regional Representative for the United States and the Caribbean.

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