

**PRESS-RELEASE**

**UNHCR launches new online database with human rights and refugee information in Spanish**

6 April 2017

Argentina / Buenos Aires. On April 6, in the framework of the first 2017 meeting of the Refugee Eligibility Committees of the MERCOSUR and Associated States, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) launched the Spanish language version of Refworld, the online database with more than 10,000 documents on human rights and refugee related issues.

The Spanish database ([www.refworld.org.es](http://www.refworld.org.es)) is modelled on the English online version of Refworld, which was launched ten years ago and is today a widely used online research and protection tool helping government officials and judges to take appropriate decision about refugee status. Other stakeholders involved in the asylum procedure – lawyers, legal aid providers, NGOs – will also benefit from this tool.

The Spanish database has been established to overcome the existing difficulties in finding accurate, impartial, and up-to-date information in this language about the countries of origin of the asylum-seekers as well as relevant legislation and jurisprudence on asylum issues. Asylum-seekers who apply for international protection in Spanish-speaking countries are therefore the ultimate beneficiaries of this project.

“Being the authority that is responsible for the delicate but vital task of processing asylum claims, we welcome this initiative to be able to access information that is crucial to take sound decisions in refugee status determination” affirmed Federico Agusti, the President of the Argentinian National Commission for Refugees and pro-tempore President of the MERCOSUR and Associated States hosting the regional forum discussing refugee matters.

Refworld offers, free of charge, a vast collection of reports, policy guidance and position papers, along with, amongst others, decisions of the Inter-American Commission and Court of Human Rights, other relevant sub-regional organizations (MERCOSUR, CELAC, CARICOM etc.), regional processes (Regional Conference on Migration), instruments and relevant national legislation. The collection is updated regularly from more than 115 reputable sources – including UNHCR and other UN bodies, governments, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and judicial bodies.

A number of thematic pages in Refworld offering mini-portals with information on Children; Detention; Resettlement; Internally Displaced Persons; Refugee Status Determination; and Statelessness, is readily available for a wider audience including human rights activists, members of the judiciary, academics and researchers.

“We are proud to be able to assist States in Latin America and other Spanish-speaking countries in their remarkable efforts to constantly improve the quality of their asylum decision making systems. At times when more people are seeking sanctuary in the Americas, we are confident that Refworld can help the asylum services and lawyers working in the region to better assess their international protection needs”, said Mr. Michele Manca di Nissa, UNHCR Regional Representative for Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.

The creation of the Spanish version of Refworld forms part of UNHCR's support to the Quality Assurance Initiative in the region. The 'Quality of Asylum' programme established in the 2014 Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action aims at increasing fairness and efficiencies of the asylum systems in Latin America and the Caribbean with an emphasis on respect for and application of due process standards. The importance to strengthen the provision of country-of-origin information is a clear commitment of this Quality Asylum programme.

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