

Brazil



Statement by the Government of Brazil
to the
70th Session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR

Agenda item 3 – General Debate

Mr. President,

Mr. High Commissioner,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first congratulate UNHCR for organizing during this session a High-level Segment on Statelessness. Preventing and reducing statelessness is a collective responsibility and a fundamental step towards ensuring universal access to human rights. My country has adopted all necessary measures to resolve persisting cases of statelessness and to prevent future ones, in line with our commitment to eradicate statelessness by 2024, as reflected in the Brazil Action Plan.

Beyond having acceded to all relevant international instruments on statelessness, Brazil has put in place, through our Migration Law, a national statelessness determination procedure that is now fully operational. Recognized stateless persons will qualify for naturalization after a period of only two years of residence, through a simplified procedure. By adopting both principles of "ius soli" and "ius sanguinis", Brazilian Federal Constitution has set us in the right course to prevent future cases of statelessness.

Mr. President,

I am happy to announce that, last June, the Brazilian National Committee for Refugees decided to apply to Venezuelan asylum-seekers the legal definition inspired by the 1984 Cartagena Declaration, which will allow for a more expedite process of status determination.

This is another manifestation of our longstanding solidarity with the people of Venezuela, who is suffering unprecedented hardship.

In the case of Brazil, the influx of Venezuelan refugees and migrants has had a tremendous impact on the border State of Roraima, where local services are completely overwhelmed. More than 480 thousand refugees and migrants have entered Brazil, of which more than 200 thousand are still in the country. Given the continuing crisis in Venezuela, the number of daily crossings has been on the rise in the last weeks, from an average of 500 to frequent peaks of 700 per day, reaching more than 1.000 on certain occasions.

Brazil has decided to respond to the influx with a policy of open borders and open arms. All Venezuelans can apply for temporary residence or refugee status in Brazil, with no need for visas. We have decided to accept expired Venezuelan passports as valid documents, including for travel within Brazil, for another five years.

Given the overwhelming impact of the crisis on local structures, the Brazilian government set up a government-led, multi-sector and multi-agency task-force that articulates the efforts of various government branches, international agencies (notably UNHCR, IOM, UNFPA, and UNICEF, among others), and national and international NGOs. We call it "Operação Acolhida" (Operation Welcome).

It is structured in three main pillars:

The first one is the reception centers, which provide services at the very arrival of refugees and migrants in Brazilian territory, such as identification, registration, migratory regularization or asylum claims processing, sanitary and health care, immunization, and documentation (including, and specially, civil identity, social security number and labor permit). Having gone through that process, all Venezuelans have access to all public services in Brazil.

The second pillar is humanitarian assistance to migrants and refugees, which is provided mainly in 13 public shelters and other public facilities, in the form of meals, sanitation, health and social assistance, communication services, among others. Shelters serve an estimated 7 thousand Venezuelans. There are two dedicated shelters for indigenous populations (of the "Warao" group), and separate facilities for families with children, women, LGBTI people and vulnerable groups.

The third pillar has become the priority focus of the entire operation: it is the so-called interiorization strategy, a modality of voluntary internal resettlement aimed at providing refugees and migrants with better living conditions and social and economic opportunities in cities away from the border and with better infrastructure, services and more economic opportunities.

Since April 2018, more than 14 thousand Venezuelans have benefited from the interiorization program, being relocated to more than 200 Brazilian cities in various regions, where they continue to receive support from federal and local government, international agencies, private sector, and civil society.

The interiorization program has shown tremendous potential to foster local integration. More than 40% of the beneficiaries of working-age were able to find a job in the first three months of their relocation.

Last week, President Bolsonaro himself launched the second phase of the Operation: a set of new measures aiming at ramping up local integration and self-reliance.

These measures include: 1) a new reception center and dedicated shelter in Manaus for accelerating the interiorization strategy; 2) the establishment of an independent fund for receiving private and international donations and channeling these resources directly to the humanitarian response, with full transparency and tracking mechanisms; and 3) an agreement with the National Confederation of Municipalities to scale up the interiorization efforts, tapping into the potential of local governments and communities.

As the crisis in Venezuela shows no sign of abating, mobilization of international support and of private funding, in a spirit of responsibility-sharing, will be key to ensure that our countries can continue to exert their solidarity towards our Venezuelan brothers and sisters.

We are grateful for the UN and its various agencies for their cooperation and we count on the international community to further support the countries in the region facing this major crisis.

Mr. President,

Brazil has also continued to do its part when it comes to durable solutions. In 2019, we are receiving 25 persons from the north of Central America in the first ever resettlement program in Brazil with government-funded direct assistance. UNHCR and IOM's support, through the Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Support Mechanism (ERCM), has been essential to make this happen.

We are also looking into the legal dispositions that will allow us to launch community and private sponsorship programs. As the ERCM comes to its conclusion, we look forward to continue to work with UNHCR and IOM, under the new Sustainable Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative, with a view to further enhance our role in resettlement.

Finally, Mr. President, Brazil is already putting in place a number of practices that function as complementary pathways. More recently, we have granted residency for humanitarian purposes to Haitians and Venezuelans, apart from granting residency for purposes of migratory policy to Cubans and Dominicans. To conclude, I am very happy to announce that we have published, today, new administrative provisions that will automatically grant temporary residence in Brazil to persons affected by the Syrian conflict who are holders of humanitarian visas.

I thank you.