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San José Action Statement: A Regional Response to Address Protection Needs

A Side Event of the Summit for Refugees and Migrants

**21 September 2016, 6:15 p.m. — 8:00 p.m.
Conference Room 4, United Nations Headquarters**

**Sponsored by Costa Rica, Mexico, United States of America and the
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

Concept Note

This side event will discuss how the Americas is developing mechanisms to share responsibility in addressing pressing protection needs in the region. Violence in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras continues to generate, in among other factors, growing forced displacement in and around the region. Last year alone, people from these countries filed nearly 56,000 new asylum applications not only in Mexico and the United States of America, but also in Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Panama. The need for regional cooperation and solid responsibility sharing mechanisms in addressing these protection needs has never been greater.

With a view to enhancing regional cooperation and complementing the 2014 Brazil Plan of Action, UNHCR and the Organization of American States (OAS) convened a *“Call to Action” High-Level Roundtable on Protection Needs in the Northern Triangle of Central America* in San José, Costa Rica, on 6-7 July 2016. Hosted by the Government of Costa Rica, the Roundtable brought together representatives from nine countries of North and Central America, four observer countries from South America, the United Nations system, Regional Organizations, Multilateral Development Banks, civil society and academia. The document that resulted from the discussions, known as the San José Action Statement, sets out a series of comprehensive commitments to tackle the various dimensions of the protection situation in affected countries. These include prevention, addressing root causes, protection mechanisms within the countries of origin, and international protection for asylum-seekers and refugees fleeing these countries. The Statement also includes specific commitments to strengthen regional responsibility sharing.

The San José Action Statement reflects a strong commitment to enhance regional cooperation in addressing forced displacement and can inform the operationalization of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), to be adopted as an Annex to the NY Declaration on 19 September. Managing multiple immediate and long-term challenges and needs faced by forcibly displaced populations and the communities that host them represent a shared responsibility. An effective and sustainable response to different forms of displacement requires engagement across a range of stakeholders to develop innovative approaches to protection and solutions, which go beyond immediate assistance and require institutional, development, and security interventions to stabilize these population groups. The CRRF sets out a roadmap for all stakeholders to follow in ensuring a coordinated and joined-up approach in responding to the refugee dimension of the situation. This side event will explore common and individual commitments made in San José as examples of responsibility sharing as foreseen in the CRRF.

Objectives:

- To increase awareness of the San José Action Statement as a critical step in regional cooperation in Central America, aimed at addressing growing protection needs.
- To share concrete examples of complementary and joined-up initiatives to protect refugees and other persons of concern.
- To consider how best to harness regional cooperation to further a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) to be adopted as an Annex to the NY Declaration on 19 September.

Moderator: Volker Turk, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR

Opening Remarks: Manuel Gonzalez Sanz, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Costa Rica

Panelists: Representatives from the countries of North and Central America, as well as other key stakeholders