

**Testimony of Julieta Valls Noyes**  
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**House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere**  
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Good afternoon, Chair Salazar, Ranking Member Castro, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. I am pleased to be here with my colleagues to speak about the critical work we are doing in the Americas, in close coordination with each other, with other U.S. government agencies, with international organizations, and with regional government partners.

As we gather here today, Western Hemisphere governments are confronting the largest displacement crisis in history. Of the more than 100 million people forced to abandon their homes, families, and livelihoods globally, some 20 million are in this hemisphere, including more than seven million Venezuelans. Governments across the hemisphere are working tirelessly with international and non-governmental partner organizations to manage their borders humanely while protecting vulnerable migrants. The problem is complex, it is growing, and it is increasingly clear that no single country can tackle it alone.

This is why 20 other Western Hemisphere leaders joined President Biden in endorsing the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection on the margins of the Summit of the Americas last June. The Los Angeles Declaration calls for regional approaches to mitigate and address migration challenges. It provides a framework for endorsing countries to make progress jointly on migration priorities. We are already seeing evidence of that progress. Colombia and Ecuador have taken significant steps to regularize the status of migrants in their countries and to provide support services. Belize launched an amnesty program in fall 2022 to register asylum seekers, refugees, and vulnerable migrants that attracted 12,000 applicants. Here in the United States, we concluded a memorandum of understanding with Mexico on labor mobility and temporary foreign worker protection.

In response to growing needs, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration provided nearly **\$580 million** in humanitarian assistance for the Western Hemisphere in Fiscal Year 2022. With this assistance, our international humanitarian organization partners deliver lifesaving water, shelter, sanitation, and emergency healthcare to refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, and vulnerable migrants. Our assistance supports integration and livelihoods programs in countries throughout the hemisphere to provide solutions closer to home for displaced people who might otherwise pursue dangerous secondary migration, including to the United States. It funds capacity-building work to develop effective and efficient asylum systems in partner countries, and gives local communities the resources to respond to migration and forced displacement.

I am proud to say we get results. With assistance administered by PRM, partner organizations helped Colombia develop and implement a ten-year temporary protected status program providing 1.6 million Venezuelans with legal status in Colombia, allowing them to work and access health, education, and other basic services. Thanks largely to funds Congress has appropriated to PRM, the UN Refugee agency has helped Mexico grow its national asylum agency and streamline asylum processes to manage an increase in applications. In 2021, Mexico became the world's third largest recipient of asylum applications and in FY 2022 received 120,000 applications – more than 700 percent growth in five years' time. Meanwhile, PRM-supported integration, livelihoods, and other programs for vulnerable migrants have made Mexico a viable destination for asylum applicants who historically would have continued onward to the border to seek asylum in the United States.

The Department is doing its best to meet the needs of the moment. Right now, the Department is bringing existing and available resources to the table to surge our support to the region to the maximum extent possible. We are substantially expanding our migration-related programming in this hemisphere this year as we reevaluate priorities for our

assistance and make necessary trade-offs globally. We also continue to monitor humanitarian assistance needs in the hemisphere and the current and future trade-offs needed to surge support. As we confront those difficult decisions and as we look toward future requirements, we will do so in close coordination with our colleagues across the Administration and in Congress.

For some forced to flee persecution, refugee resettlement remains the best durable solution. We are expanding our own refugee resettlement efforts in the hemisphere, but we can and should do more. The President already committed to resettling 20,000 refugees over two years from our hemisphere, and we are working to make that number even higher.

At the same time, we also are building a Resettlement Diplomacy Network of governments around the world that are committed to expanding overall global refugee resettlement capacity. We are bringing partner countries together to share the responsibility of refugee resettlement more equally. I hosted a meeting of senior officials of this Network in Washington just last week, and we agreed to work together on several shared priorities.

We are also working in close partnership with the Department of Homeland Security on humane migration management as a part of a comprehensive, hemispheric response to migration. In April, Secretaries Blinken and Mayorkas announced a new initiative of regional processing centers for lawful migration pathways that we now are calling Movilidad Segura. Through Movilidad Segura, our international organization partners will run regional offices where they will help facilitate access to refugee resettlement pre-screening and provide information on other lawful pathways. Refugees, asylum seekers, and other vulnerable migrants will be able to visit Movilidad Segura offices in key regional locations to get critical information and assistance – without putting themselves in the hands of smugglers and in the way of danger. These centers are an important component of our partnership with DHS.

We are committed to responsible stewardship of limited resources to meet growing humanitarian needs in the Americas and beyond. We are actively seeking to combine short- and medium-term humanitarian relief funding with longer-term development assistance in innovative ways that multiply the impact of every taxpayer dollar. We are looking beyond traditional bilateral assistance approaches and reaching out to international financial institutions and multilateral development banks to advocate innovative financing for projects that can help migrants and their hosts in vulnerable communities. Concessional financing, such as the World Bank-hosted Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF), provide opportunities for longer-term investments like support for climate resistant infrastructure in refugee hosting communities in Costa Rica.

And we have launched a public-private partnership with the Tent Partnership for Refugees to build private sector support for refugee livelihoods opportunities. I was in Mexico a couple of weeks ago with the Tent Partnership founder, Chobani Yogurt CEO Hamdi Ulukaya. We met with hundreds of business leaders who were eager to employ migrants, not just to help vulnerable people, but as a way of contributing to their own bottom lines. Employment is a critical aspect of integration and self-reliance, a lesson I learned from my own parents who entered our country as refugees from Cuba.

In closing, I want to thank the members of this committee for holding this hearing and giving us the opportunity to discuss these critical issues and the work we are doing to meet the challenges of the moment. We appreciate your support.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.