

June 16, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Bloc
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

We write this joint letter to you in advance of the International Donors' Conference in Solidarity with Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants on June 17, 2021, hosted by the Government of Canada. Over 5.6 million Venezuelans have fled their country, many of whom continue to face urgent humanitarian needs, notably access to food, shelter, healthcare services, water, sanitation and hygiene, and protection.

As civil society organizations with humanitarian response programs that support Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean, we are seized with the direness of the challenges Venezuelans face, and are looking for continued Canadian leadership to ensure donors are laser-focused on meeting the needs of the millions of displaced Venezuelans in the region.

We welcome the focus in this year's Conference on the critical roles civil society plays in the response to the Venezuela refugee and migrant crisis. Civil society actors, including community-based organizations, are the frontline of this crisis and implement 90% of the response. As members and supporters of the Coalition for the Rights of Refugees, Migrants and Displaced Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean, we stand with our partners in calling for the voices of Venezuelan refugees and migrants and community-based organizations to be central to this conference.

In the context of an ongoing global pandemic, humanitarian access is being impeded by denial of need, lack of infrastructure, bureaucratic constraints, interference in the delivery of aid and attacks on humanitarian personnel, as well as widespread insecurity and civil protests. Among those forced to flee, children, adolescents, women, indigenous people and the LGBTIQ+ community face increased risks of trafficking and exploitation, violence and abuse, as well as forced recruitment into armed groups.

We know that progress on meeting these crucial needs cannot be made without longer term investments and concerted efforts to secure durable solutions to the plight of Venezuelans in the region.

To this end, we believe that Canada should build on its past leadership and seize this opportunity to ensure the Conference results in concrete gains for the millions of Venezuelans who have fled their country. We therefore call on your government to lead by example and encourage your peer donors to:

- Ensure that funding pledged at the conference is new and additional, and that humanitarian funding is released rapidly to partners to ensure timely responses. In 2020, only 23% of funds committed were grants as compared to loans. We are calling on donors to increase their grant contributions.
- Ensure more resources are allocated over a longer period of time, and directly to civil society organizations working on the ground, who have so far received only \$8 out of

every \$100 required to do their work. Those organizations have a heightened insight into the rapidly-changing humanitarian context in the region, knowledge of existing support mechanisms stemming from daily interaction with the most vulnerable people, and demonstrated capacity to deliver support in a rapid, coordinated manner that ensures that vital assistance reaches those who need it the most.

- Ensure transparency and accountability for pledges from other donors. This includes the implementation of a monitoring system to follow up on the commitments made at the conference to track the disbursement and use of funds, generates regular reports and guarantees the strategic participation of civil society organizations. It is crucial to know who receives the resources and what the geographic, population and sectoral targets are.

At a time when the world is facing a confluence of global crises, including COVID-19 and climate change, this is the time for Canada to step up and send a message to Venezuelan refugees and migrants across Latin America and the Caribbean: that the world has not forgotten about their human rights and their hopes for a better future.

We thank you for your attention, and we will continue to engage with the Government of Canada on this important matter.

Sincerely,



cc: Karina Gould, Minister of International Development