

## **Temporary Protected Status for Venezuelan Migrants in Colombia: Opportunities and Challenges**

**Remarks by Adriana Mejía Hernández,  
Vice Minister of Multilateral Affairs of Colombia**

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Distinguished guests,

On behalf of the Government of Colombia, I would like to thank you the Colombia American Association, the Venezuelan American Association and the Wilson Center for hosting this important event that will make important reflections about one of the most important contemporary topics: migration, its effects and challenges.

The sudden arrival of 1.7 million migrants into our national territory since 2015 required a rapid response as it was exceeding the State capacities. Since then, the Colombian Government has built robust and comprehensive tools to address this phenomenon in close coordination with donors and international agencies.

Bearing this in mind, I would like to touch upon two main ideas:

First: the magnitude of the crisis that is present in Venezuela is unprecedented in the Western Hemisphere. As a country committed to democracy and the protection of human rights, we cannot ignore the devastation that the Chavez and Maduro regimes have inflicted on the Venezuelan people and can only call to those who share our values to seek a structural solution to this regional and global challenge.

Secondly, I would like to highlight the approach that Colombia has adopted to address the migration coming from Venezuela. We see migration as an opportunity. Most Venezuelan migrants are young and eager to work. Providing them with the necessary conditions to have access

to health, education and social services, as well as employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, will propel our economic and social progress.

The implementation of the recently adopted Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants speaks for that. Through this public policy tool, we will offer protection to more than 800.000 irregular migrants, we will allow them to work in the Colombian territory, we will guarantee their access to public and private institutional offer, and they will be provided with an ID that will open doors in the labor market that will boost the local economies.

However, more financial resources are needed to address to implement the TPS, especially in terms of technology and human resources. The Colombian government, who has always been committed to multilateralism, works with the international cooperation through the framework of the Interagency Group for Mixed Migratory Flows (GIFMM) and has a the “Refugee and Migrant Response Plan” (RMRP). Nonetheless, we believe that the private sector can play a key role on gathering efforts to fully implement the TPS and contribute to the transformation of migration from a social phenomenon to a development opportunity.

I look forward to hearing your deliberations.