

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES-ROTARY EVENT HONORED WORLD REFUGEES DAY

By Lara Bersano, PDG Rich Carson, and Quentin Wodon

On June 23, the Rotary Club of Washington Global and the Organization of American States (OAS) organized an event in honor of World Refugee Day. The OAS brings together all 35 independent states of the

Americas and constitutes the main political, juridical, and social governmental forum in the Hemisphere. It uses a four-pronged approach to implement its essential purposes based on its main pillars: democracy, human rights, security, and development. It is one of the international organizations with which Rotary International maintains collaborations through its network of Rotary Representatives.

Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are among the most vulnerable people on earth. Due to conflicts and economic crises, their number has increased with UNHCR estimating that 79.5 million people were forcibly displaced in 2019. After Syria, Venezuela has the largest number of displaced people. The OAS has played a critical role in gathering support in Latin America for programs to support refugees.

The high level event on June 23 was entitled “Migrants and refugees in the Americas in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: Challenges and multisectoral solutions.” As shown in the flier for the event, the list of speakers included the Secretary General of the OAS, the General

Venezuela and globally to provide relief and create opportunities for refugees. The report shows in practical ways how Rotarians and other people of action can alleviate the suffering of refugees and invest in their future. Videos from the event are also available on the club’s website.

"MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN THE AMERICAS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: CHALLENGES AND MULTISECTORAL SOLUTIONS"

OPENING REMARKS

- LUIS ALMAGRO**
OAS SECRETARY GENERAL
- ALEXANDRA HILL**
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF EL SALVADOR
- JOHN HEWKO**
GENERAL SECRETARY OF ROTARY INTERNATIONAL
- CLAUDIA BLUM DE BARBERI**
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF COLOMBIA
- DIEGO BELTRAND**
SPECIAL ENVOY FOR THE IOM FOR VENEZUELAN MIGRANT AND REFUGEE FLOWS

PANEL: MULTISECTORAL APPROACHES TO MIGRANT AND REFUGEE FLOWS IN THE AMERICAS

- INGO PLOGER**
President of the Business Council of Latin America (CEAL) Brazil
- BETILDE MUÑOZ-POGOSSIAN**
OAS Director of the Department of Social Inclusion
- DAVID SMOLANSKY**
Commissioner of the OAS Secretary General for the Crisis of Venezuelan Migrants and Refugees
- CRISTAL MONTAÑEZ**
Rotary e-Club of Houston
HOPE for Venezuelan Refugees
- BARTON GOLDENBERG**
District Governor of Rotary 07620
Rotary International
- GUSTAU ALEGRET**
MODERATOR
U.S. News Director
NTN24
- QUENTIN WODON**
President
Rotary Club of Washington Global
- RICH CARSON**
RI Representative to the OAS

Secretary of Rotary International, the Foreign Ministers of Colombia and El Salvador, and representatives from OAS, the private sector, and civil society – including DG Barton Goldenberg for our district. The event was a great way for all participants to renew their commitment to helping refugees.

Ahead of the event, the Rotary Club of Washington Global published a report available on its website (www.WashingtonGlobalRotary.org) on the role that Rotarians have played in

What are the next steps? One of the ideas following the event is to explore the feasibility of creating a Rotary Action Group (RAG) on refugees to help clubs and districts globally implement projects in support of refugees and IDPs. No decision has been made yet on submitting a proposal for a RAG to the board of Rotary International which would need to approve such a RAG, but if you are interested in the idea, please send an email to Quentin Wodon at rotarianeconomist@gmail.com.