**TITLE WORKSHOP ON THEDEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION DURING THE SEARCH FOR MISSING PERSONS**

**ORGANIZER INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC)**

**PRESENTATION**

Thousands of persons migrate from Central America and Mexico towards the North each year, seeking to improve their economic situation or reunite with their families or fleeing from violence which affects their integrity and that of their families. However, the journey they embark on is not free from risks and thus, migrants find themselves in highly vulnerable situations.

During their journey, migrants can fall victim to abuse and crime, such as physical aggression, rape, extortion and abduction, and be exposed to criminal or armed groups. In many cases, these situations lead to the disappearance of persons. For the families of the missing persons, the uncertainty of not knowing what happened to their loved ones is exacerbated due to the psychosocial, economic and legal consequences of the disappearance.

The document that is attached to this proposal presents the primary challenges related to the disappearance of migrants and offers a set of recommendations relating to the search for persons, forensic identification, meeting the needs of the families of missing migrants and preventing the disappearance of persons. In addition, specific recommendations are provided for the RCM to incorporate this topic in its work.

Two of the main issues identified by the ICRC are as follows:

* It is not possible to establish reliable figures since standardized records do not exist. One of the reasons for this is that the irregular status of migrants prevents them or their families from filing complaints for fear that the migrants could be deported or subjected to extortion. In addition, information exchange mechanisms are not in place to enable centralizing the information. Nevertheless, while the existing figures are fragmented they are troubling:according to the US Customs and Border Patrol,6,915 deceased migrants were reported in the border region between the US and Mexico from1998 to2016; and according to the International Organization for Migration, 400 deceased migrants were reported in the same border region and 150 in Central America in 2016.
* Clearly established, effective and efficient routes for reporting, exchanging information and searching for missing migrants are lacking in countries of origin of migrants or in transit and destination countries. A variety of State and non-state actors exist that play roles which, while they sometimes overlap, leave many gaps that are not being closed by anyone.

In this regard, the challenge is to create mechanisms for coordination and cooperation between relevant authorities at all levels. The Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) is an appropriate space to begin making progress in this regard. Therefore, the ICRC proposes that a workshop be held within the framework of the RCM to discuss and agree on Regional Guidelines for the Exchange of Information During the Search for Missing Persons.

**OBJECTIVE**

* To contribute to the centralization, systematization and exchange of information between countries and social organizations in the region;
* To develop a regional information management mechanism with homologated information exchange procedures and tools;
* To ensure that the above-mentioned mechanism guarantees the protection of personal data.

**METHODOLOGY**

* Presentation by the ICRC of draft Regional Guidelines for the Exchange of Information During the Search for Missing Migrants;
* A workshop to discuss and develop the draft Regional Guidelines to be submitted for consideration by the Regional Consultation Group on Migration.

**EXPECTED RESULT**

* Draft Regional Guidelines for the Exchange of Information During the Search for Missing Migrants.