



Opening Remarks  
Guillermo Fernández de Soto  
Ambassador – Permanent Representative

*“Towards IMRF May 2022 - Information Session on the health of migrants”*  
March 2022 / 10:00 am – 6:00 pm (Virtual)

3 minutes

Good morning, everyone.

I want to thank Dr. Zsuzsanna Jakab -from the *World Health Organization*-; Ms. Jacqueline Weekers -from the *International Organization for Migration*- and to the *Group of Friends on Universal Health Coverage*, especially to my colleagues, the Permanent Representatives of Georgia, Japan and Thailand, for organizing this relevant webinar on the health of migrants.

At this unprecedented time in our history, when we are still facing a pandemic and its consequences, as well as several armed conflicts worldwide, migrant health is an issue of paramount importance for intergovernmental platforms. The first International Migration Review Forum-IMRF arrives at a timely moment in that regard.

When it comes to the social determinants of Health and Health Equity, the *W-H-O* has provided clear evidence of the higher risks of infection and severity from COVID-19 that experience migrants affected by emergencies, including humanitarian and conflict.

Colombia supports the promotion of Universal Health Coverage, through the adoption of measures to address the social determinants of health. Access to UHC needs to be guaranteed regardless of migratory status.



Last year, driven by a solid commitment to the achievement of the Agenda 2030; and the principle of solidarity, and respect for human rights, the Government of Colombia leading by example issued the Temporary Statute for the protection of Venezuelan Migrant Status. Today, we have registered almost 2 million Venezuelans.

This humanitarian gesture allows Venezuelan migrants in Colombia to access different services, including the national health system and COVID-19 vaccination plans.

Of course, implementing this initiative requires heavy financial and technical investment and plenty of cooperation with different stakeholders. I want to highlight the essential role played by the *I-O-M* in coordinating our partners' efforts and contributions to support the roll-out of this long-term measure that reflects Colombia's conviction on Universal Health Coverage.

Dear friends, the Colombian case is an example of solidarity-based practices concerning the challenges faced by migrants. We hope our experience can inspire other countries to promote the global health and migration agenda with a sustainable development approach.

I am sure that this webinar will set the basis for the forthcoming debates at the IMRF and we are optimistic about meaningful outcomes that can bring us closer to a fairer, healthier world for everyone, everywhere.

Thank you very much.