



do on his own. The U.S. will admit from Haiti, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela tens of thousands under certain conditions, like having a sponsor in the U.S. Illegal crossing would render such persons ineligible. The Venezuelan program, started in October, has resulted in a drastic drop in illegal border crossings. That is promising.

Cooperation with Mexico is essential to make the initiatives work. Mexico has agreed to take up to 30,000 per month of those migrants expelled by the U.S. The four-country program noted above and other measures including use of “aps” to get asylum appointments have at least temporarily reduced illegal border crossings by significant amounts. Other important actions to reduce the problem at the border include major increases in asylum officers and immigration judges. The officers can determine at the border if the person has a credible fear of returning and a decision can be made about referral or not to a judge.

Mexican President Lopez Obrador and President Biden agreed in a January 7, 2023, meeting that “root

causes” of desperate migration must be addressed. Those causes have been increasing over time. Back in 1998 after a devastating Category 5 hurricane, I accompanied visiting President George H.W. Bush to a meeting with President Flores of Honduras. Flores asked Bush if he remembered the Haitian and Cuban “boat people” who spilled over the coast of Florida in great numbers. Of course President Bush said he did. Well, President Flores replied, if there were no effective aid and development funds from the U.S. and other donors, then Honduran “feet people” would march up to Texas. In fact, that has happened.

Well-funded and effectively focused U.S. aid to promote security and economic development can have a positive effect and reduce the “push” factors in migration. Expanded trade with Central America is mutually bene

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America: The Jesuit Review publishes regularly on the topic of immigration <https://www.americamagazine.org/>