

**Speaking Notes for the Honourable Ahmed Hussen,
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship**

**Keynote speech for a dialogue hosted by the
International Organization for Migration**

*Understanding Migrant Vulnerabilities: A solution-based approach towards a
global compact that reduces vulnerabilities and empowers migrants*

Geneva, Switzerland

Date: July 18, 2017

Before I begin, I'd like to thank the International Organization for Migration for inviting me here to speak today, and for hosting this important dialogue.

Avant de commencer, j'aimerais remercier l'Organisation internationale pour les migrations de m'avoir invité à prendre la parole aujourd'hui, ainsi que d'avoir organisé cet important dialogue.

When we last convened in New York, I spoke about the importance of comprehensive, planned, national approaches to migration, not only as a nation-building tool, but also as an effective response to the challenges global migration can bring.

This morning, I want to build on this by sharing with you how Canada tries to reduce and prevent migrant vulnerabilities and empower migrants to achieve positive outcomes and contribute to our society.

I will speak to Canada's approaches at the international, bilateral, and domestic levels.

Je parlerai des approches du Canada sur les plans international, bilatéral et national.

First, at the international level, Canada promotes the value of increasing regular opportunities and pathways for mobility.

Premièrement, à l'échelle internationale, le Canada fait la promotion de l'importance d'accroître les possibilités et cheminements ordinaires donnant accès à la mobilité.

Offering more regular, safe and transparent opportunities for migrants to apply to enter another country to reunite with their family, to work, study or seek protection, can curb the need for migrants to resort to dangerous irregular migration routes.

We note that most migration – even today – takes place voluntarily and without incident.

Yet, increasingly, we see conflict and civil unrest, severe poverty, starvation and lack of opportunity, and climate change as drivers of migration out of necessity. Desperation and a lack

of available legal pathways compel them to embark on precarious migration schemes, and sustain networks of smugglers and human traffickers. This can create or exacerbate vulnerability, opening up migrants to exploitation or abuse.

Over the past two decades, more than 50,000 individuals have died trying to cross international borders.

For those who complete their journeys, life in a new country is often full of unanticipated hardship. They may face detention, violence and exploitation, gender-based violence and abuse, stress and trauma, inability to attend school or work legally, health complications, discrimination and xenophobia.

These are just some of the challenges that large numbers of migrants experience on a daily basis.

While we certainly don't have all of the answers, Canada remains strongly committed to sharing the approaches we have used and learned, both those that have worked, and the ones that haven't, in our continued effort to find ways to cooperate internationally to help migrants in vulnerable situations.

In terms of our international efforts, multilaterally, Canada is engaged in the development of both Global Compacts. Our goal is to share and learn from others to promote concrete, actionable ways to address these challenges by calling on countries to strengthen their national governance of migration.

This refers to the implementation of comprehensive migration systems addressing situations of vulnerability, protecting human rights, providing alternatives to dangerous and irregular movements, and promoting inclusion, diversity, and the rule of law.

Increasing opportunities for migrants to move safely and regularly will not only help reduce the vulnerabilities of migrants, it will in the longer term allow countries to reap the proven benefits of migration and work towards meeting the migration-related sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030.

Second, at the bilateral and regional level, Canada is leading to advance national migration priorities, including our focus on the human rights of women and girls.

In Central America, for example, Canada is working to address drivers of irregular migration by helping to provide at-risk youth with employment opportunities, strengthen child protection services and violence prevention and inform government leaders on the dangers and root causes of irregular child migration.

In Haiti, Canada is working with the International Organization for Migration to prevent the trafficking of women and children and to better protect them, especially in border areas.

In Southeast Asia, we are collaborating with governments, the private sector, and civil society to ensure workers have decent wages and improved working conditions and to provide information to prospective migrants on the risks of using smugglers and other modes of irregular migration.

Across all of its work, Canada focuses on the rights of women and girls. Gender dynamics have important impacts on migration experiences. Women migrants make valuable contributions to economic and social development in countries of origin and destination.

However, women and girls can be more vulnerable to physical and sexual violence and exploitation, trafficking, abuse, or

marriage at a young age, without their consent. They often do not have access to civil registration (birth or citizenship documents), are not allowed to pass their nationality on to their children, or may be unable to freely and safely access abortions and other health services they may need.

Last month, Canada launched a Feminist International Assistance Policy, through which we are investing \$150 million over five years to help local organizations in developing countries that promote women's rights.

This is a matter of basic justice and also basic economics. We know that empowering women around the world makes families and communities more prosperous.

Finally, at the national level, I want to speak to the targeted settlement services and integration supports provided by Canada to help newcomers become successful in their new country.

Canada's whole-of-society approach to immigration and integration is anchored by our multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic citizenry – the result of Canada's history of

welcoming generations of immigrants and of providing protection to those in vulnerable situations.

As I said when we last met in New York, Canada recognizes that our approach to migration can't simply be copied in other countries who have their own unique challenges and national historic and geographic contexts. However, we believe there are some core common principles that could be adopted by other nations.

The settlement and meaningful, effective integration of immigrants, in particular through schools and places of employment, is something we deem a priority in Canada.

In the longer term, diversity benefits the economic and demographic growth, nation building, innovation, and prosperity of a country. This is not simply a value statement that is advocated by the Government. Rather, it is a sentiment that is widely supported by the general public.

In Canada, all immigrants are seen as vital contributors to our economic prosperity and well-being.

Data shows that our citizens believe that the success of newcomers translates to our success as a country. In fact, the economic and educational outcomes of the children of immigrants are at par or exceed those of their Canadian-born counterparts.

Through inclusive laws and policies, as well as investments in settlement and integration services and multi-sectoral partnerships, our Government helps to create an inclusive, welcoming environment to bring about social cohesion and public confidence in the country's ability to manage migration.

But, recognizing the value migrants contribute to societies, provinces, cities, organizations and businesses, also improves understanding of cultural differences, reduces racial and

migrant-related tensions, and can ultimately help to counter xenophobia.

Our programs and partnerships have enabled the successful settlement and integration of migrants to Canada, and this has led to our high levels of public support for immigration.

Integration is viewed as a two-way process, requiring mutual adaptation by newcomers and by Canadian society. While it is incumbent upon newcomers to make the necessary efforts to be able to participate in Canadian life, it is also society's duty to promote a welcoming environment that fosters the integration of all newcomers and ultimately their success.

People will continue to move. Countries can either try to stop them – which we fear will only drive them underground and increase their vulnerability – or they can try to establish programs that will help newcomers and their societies benefit from the diversity, innovation and other benefits of regular, safe and orderly migration.

Canada recommends, as part of inclusion or integration initiatives, enhancing services for the most vulnerable newcomers, including women, senior immigrants and people from certain ethnic groups. These groups are more likely to face barriers related to low income, social isolation, poor health and access to housing.

To address these challenges, Canada's settlement programming funds a range of targeted settlement services that can be accessed by newcomers – including women and youth – based on their needs, such as mentoring, information and orientation on rights and responsibilities, women's only employment and language classes, and family and gender-based violence prevention support.

In addition, child-minding and transportation services are offered to ensure that mothers, who may be the ones who primarily take on childcare responsibilities and feel unable to physically attend meetings or courses, are able to access these integration services.

This is a topic that is important to me not only as a Government representative, but it is also deeply personal. I first arrived to Canada as a young 16-year-old asylum seeker from Somalia.

Not unlike most newcomers to Canada, I had many conflicting emotions. While I had many fears and uncertainty about my future, I was also filled with an immense sense of hope and optimism about the many opportunities before me.

I am immensely grateful for the generosity and support that I received from Canadians. And it is thanks to their warm welcome that I was able to feel I belonged in my new community and become the person I am today.

Immigrants are not only welcomed and embraced by Canadians, but they are encouraged to become active, productive members of their community and integrate into Canadian society.

In closing, Canada is committed to cooperating closely with the international community to develop a Global Compact on Migration that is concrete and targeted toward key gaps that need to be filled in the way migration is governed globally.

Again, we believe the focus should first be on encouraging more countries to adopt comprehensive, planned national approaches to migration.

Through the Compact, Canada is also aiming to promote gender equality and address gender dimensions of international migration mobility.

Finally, we aim to promote diversity and the inclusion of all migrants in host countries.

Enfin, nous nous efforçons de promouvoir la diversité ainsi que l'inclusion de tous les migrants dans les pays d'accueil.

When migrants are included in the economy and life of their host community, they make many positive contributions.

Lorsque les migrants sont inclus dans l'économie et dans la vie de leur communauté d'accueil, ils apportent de nombreuses contributions positives.

In the longer term, diversity benefits economic and demographic growth, innovation and prosperity, and ultimately enhances nation building.

Thank you.

Merci.