

**Statement of the Honourable Ahmed Hussen,
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship**

**For a panel discussion hosted by the International Organization for Migration
*Implementing the migration-related sustainable development goals:
Looking ahead to the Global Compact on Migration***

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I would like to thank the International Organization for Migration for convening this dialogue, and for inviting me to take part in this panel discussion on the Global Compact on Migration and migration governance.

I speak to you not only as the representative of a country whose history has been shaped by generations of immigrants, but also as someone whose own life has been shaped by the experience of migration. I first came to Canada as a 16-year-old asylum seeker, and so I'm informed by my personal experiences – not only the challenges I faced as a young migrant, but also the opportunities I've had thanks to the Canadian understanding that newcomers make important contributions to our country.

The complex migration trends we're witnessing will likely continue, due to many factors, including: people's innate desire to seek better lives; humanitarian crises and natural disasters; demand for labour; and the realities of a more technologically-connected world.

We're increasingly concerned that unprecedented levels of migration are also fuelling growing fears in many countries and a growing negative rhetoric toward all migrants – the great majority of whom are contributing both to their new home countries and back to their countries of origin.

We need to recognize the significant contributions of many of the migrants who move regularly. In Canada, for example, according to a paper released by Statistics Canada, immigrants are far more likely to start a business than their Canadian-born counterparts. As well, the rates of private business ownership and self-employment are higher among immigrants than among the Canadian-born population.

Canada is not unique: research also indicates that other countries can and do benefit from migration. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development found that migrants arrive with skills and contribute to human capital development in receiving countries. It also found that migrants provide more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in benefits. But often, those who wish to migrate don't have regular pathways open to them.

Canada sees a comprehensive, planned approach to migration as not only an effective response to the challenges that migration can bring, but also as a nation-building tool. Harnessing the contributions of newcomers, to host economies and societies, supports long-term social, cultural and economic prosperity.

We don't claim to have all the answers in Canada with respect to this issue, but we feel many of the lessons Canada has learned about the need for robust pathways for migrants – and for planned, safe, and well-managed migration systems and practices – may be useful to the international community as it confronts this great challenge. However, we do recognize we have a unique geographic and historical narrative, and we're aware of the significant challenges faced by other source, transit and destination countries. So while Canada's system can't necessarily be "cut and pasted" into another country, the fact is that we have a comprehensive, planned national migration system and that there are some core principles that can be translated to many national systems.

We also need to encourage public and private sector leaders to confront and deal with negative rhetoric by promoting a more positive view of migration, and stressing the growing evidence of the many benefits mobility can bring.

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

We believe the focus should first be on encouraging more countries to adopt comprehensive, planned approaches to migration. It should begin with norms that already exist, such as the Migration Governance Framework, and build from there. We can identify and agree to fill gaps that exist in international governance, such as with respect to remittances or other issues at the intersection of migration and development. In this spirit, the Compact should include both long-term and short-term goals. This includes diversifying and expanding regular pathways for migration – for work, study, and family reunification – and makes it easier to take better individual and collective responsibility for managing entry, stay, and returns.

But we need to be clear that even as states improve safe, orderly and regular migration, they must do so while upholding the fundamental human rights of migrants. Creating open, rules-based pathways for regular migration doesn't minimize the ability of states to decide who comes in and who stays out. Rather, it is one element of the type of comprehensive, planned national migration system toward which we should all work.

Improving regular pathways isn't the only solution, but it can help countries in many ways, including:

- Managing large movements;
- Responding to crises;
- Relieving pressures on asylum and refugee systems;
- Reducing human tragedies and incentives for so many to undertake dangerous journeys to safety;
- Providing those who are desperate with an alternative to smuggling or other types of clandestine movements;
- Countering human trafficking;
- Unleashing the developmental potential of migrants; and
- Harnessing the human potential currently being untapped or even lost by many countries.

Few countries remain exclusively sending, transit or destination countries; most are now a combination of all three, and this type of comprehensive approach can benefit all countries. Taken together, these priorities link us in a real and concrete way to the migration-related Sustainable Development Goals we've all committed to achieve by 2030.

While the Global Compact process should be state-driven, states cannot and should not address migration alone. This process must involve the many other actors who contribute to migration governance, including citizens, international organizations, the private sector, cities and sub-national governments, unions, NGOs, community organizations, religious organizations, academics, and of course, migrants themselves.

Migration is a complex reality that presents both challenges and opportunities. The process to develop the Global Compact for safe, orderly regular migration provides us with an opportunity to bring coherence and co-ordination to all of the many different discussions that touch on migration.

With all that in mind, I'm eager to hear from my fellow panelists, and happy to participate in the question and answer session that follows.

Thank you very much.