

Closing of the OECD High-Level Policy Forum on Migration and Integration

Concluding remarks

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Dear Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

A warm thanks to all for participation in the forum today. We are very grateful for the contributions of so many Ministers and policy makers from a broad range of countries, but also of civil society, social partners, the academia, and migrants themselves. Thanks to all of you for having come to the OECD and for sharing your experience and views!

Few other policy areas cut across the aspirations, hopes and concerns of our societies as much as migration and integration do. This is why we need a whole-of-society approach to address emerging migration and integration challenges.

Finding suitable solutions to these challenges requires bringing together diverse viewpoints and experiences. This is what we have done today.

We started with the lessons that we can draw from global migration over the past decade. While every country faces its unique challenges, there is much to be learned from one another. The exchange between longstanding destination countries and those that have a more recent experience with large inflows has been particularly interesting. At the same time, the classification into “new” and “old” migration destinations is becoming less and less pertinent, as the global migration landscape changes rapidly.

Take the humanitarian crisis we face in Venezuela today. The experience of OECD countries as diverse as Canada, Germany, Greece, Sweden and Turkey – which host many humanitarian migrants, notably from Syria and other countries of the Mid-East – can give important insights for our partners in Latin America. For example, that migration – while evolving in intensity and composition – is a fact of life and that many migrants end up staying in the destination country as it happened for the so-called “guest workers” who helped to re-build post-war Europe – they were seen as temporary labour migrants, but many eventually settled.

Today we also learned that we should not think about migrants as isolated individuals, but as people with families and social connections. Families are broken apart, migrants are kept in the sea for long having no hope of being rescued. Think how it is to be on the move,

feeling insecure, losing hopes for the future! What we need are social empathy to build people-centred policies. In so many countries, preconceived notions and prejudices still dominate the discussions around migrants and migration. Obviously, rules must be respected, but our priority has to be on people.

We need to take a whole-of-family perspective to migration, both in terms of migration and integration policy. This is something that countries can learn from OECD countries that have been settled by migration, like Australia, Canada and New Zealand, where migrants are admitted not as individuals, but as entire families.

Today's Forums also highlighted the need for better coordination, at all levels, and among a plurality of actors.

Cooperation and close coordination across levels of governments is, for example, essential for reception and integration because regional and local authorities often play a key role in implementing relevant policies such as housing or social assistance. Likewise, co-operation with origin countries is crucial to make sure that migration is well-managed and benefits both origin and destination countries.

New forms of skills partnerships between countries, to match talent in one country with labour needs in another, can have positive impacts in both. We also discussed how the social partners and the civil society actively contribute to making the most of migration.

Finally, today's discussions highlighted the need to anticipate and plan ahead in order to be able to respond quickly to sudden and unforeseen inflows – as we have seen recently in the large-scale humanitarian migration to Europe and elsewhere. This may also entail working on the basis of alternative scenarios.

Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman,

Thank you again for this making this Forum a success. Our discussion today provides a pathway for tomorrow's **first ever OECD Ministerial Meeting on Migration and Integration**. Let us always remember that we talk about human beings, about people like us, about people who could be our own family or neighbours, today or tomorrow.

And let us also try turning this into a positive story. Once, I was in Germany presenting our migration report. Together with the Canadian Minister [*Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Family, Children and Social Development*], I visited a train factory, where we met a Somali migrant boy.

This boy's eyes lit up with hope and inspiration, at the sight of the Minister of Somali origin. It must have been an amazing experience for this boy, and an encounter like this could change someone's life forever. We need more of this! We need to work on policies, but we also need to keep inspiring young migrants like this to help build their future! And this is why the Forum like today's is important, so that we can support countries – and each other – in sharing a variety of experiences, so that we can keep improving our policies and thinking around migration and integration.

Now, it is time for all of us to toast on a successful event.

We are all invited to the Cocktail hosted by Chile and Spain, the Vice-Chairs of the Forum, in the *Salon du Parc* upstairs. I hope to see you there.