

FINAL REMARKS

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much. Bonjour, good afternoon. And thank you again, Commissioner Johansson, for inviting Canada to participate in today's discussion. It is really my pleasure to be with you today.

I would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which I am situated is the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg People.

Canada has a very strong tradition of offering protection to those in need. And we continue to aspire to be a global leader in refugee resettlement. Aiming to resettle up to 144, 170 thousand refugees between 2023 and 2025. I am pleased to note that we are not alone in this important effort, and that has been highlighted by the wide-ranging participation in this Forum from both sides of the Atlantic.

I also want to acknowledge in this sense the EU's important role in providing humanitarian protection to over 30,000 Afghans in need since August 2021, and, beyond resettlement, the EU's remarkable efforts to provide temporary protection to more than 4 million Ukrainian nationals since February 2022.

In Canada, all resettled refugees become permanent residents. They have access to settlement supports and services funded by IRCC, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. These supports help them to better—and more successfully—integrate into their new communities. And help them to more successfully integrate into Canadian society.

Canada has recognized that this is not necessary to keep economic immigration and traditional refugee resettlement separate. Labour complementary pathways for refugees provide a way for skilled refugees and their families to move safely to third countries through regular labour or economic immigration or migration programs. These pathways offer win-win solutions - and we heard some of the testimony just before I started my speech - because they recognize refugees' skills, experience, and their talent. And they help employers around the world fill critical labour shortages.

Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot

Here in Canada in 2018 we started an innovative program called the EMPP, Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot. And this initiative enables refugees to arrive in Canada as economic immigrants. It is a partnership effort that overcomes barriers, and helps skilled refugees and their families immigrate to Canada through existing economic programs. All while giving employers access to a new pool of qualified candidates to fill job vacancies.

The Employers who need skilled workers can hire refugees through this program. Non-governmental partners help both the candidates and employers throughout the process. They find and recruit qualified candidates, support refugees through the immigration process, and welcome our newcomers to settle into their new communities and workplaces.

Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility

And Canada is proud of the progress being made with our EMPP, Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot, with our commitment to welcome 2,000 refugees through this pathway. We also recognize refugee labour mobility must be expanded globally.

And this is why Canada—along with Australia, the UN Refugee Agency, the International Organization for Migration, the International Chamber of Commerce, Fragomen, Talent Beyond Boundaries, and RefugePoint—launched the Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility in the Spring of 2022.

This task force allows us to work with a variety of stakeholders around the world, including in Europe. And our partners include governments, businesses, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and international organizations. We are also seeking advice and input from refugees who have gone through these labour mobility pathways. This collaboration allows us to learn from each other. And to further develop and expand these pathways globally.

The EU is a likeminded partner for Canada. We are bound by common values and strong people-to-people ties. Increasingly, Canada and the EU cooperate on a range of migration and asylum issues, including at working level in the context of the European Union Asylum Agency Expert Platform on safe pathways for Afghans and the international Solidarity Platform on Ukraine.

I want to acknowledge the Commission's leadership on funding complementary pathways projects in many EU Member States, and the many valuable initiatives included in its Skills and Talent Package proposed in 2020.

Canada was proud to sign the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection last year. The implementation of this framework offers an opportunity to expand refugee labour mobility pathways. And we look forward to working with countries in the region to build partnerships to enhance and expand solutions.

Developing complementary pathways is an important contribution alongside traditional refugee resettlement. It increases solutions for refugees globally. These complementary pathways also change the narrative. They recognize refugees for their attributes—and not just their vulnerability.

And they enable more refugees to rebuild their lives while supporting our economic growth in their new communities.

CONCLUSION

In closing, I would like to emphasize that in order to expand labour pathways for refugees globally, we first need a mindset shift. Economic immigration and refugee resettlement need not work in silos.

We must remember that vulnerable people around the world are not a drain on our resources—even if they require more financial supports when they arrive. And we must remember that many refugees are also highly educated and highly skilled. They want to resettle in communities where they can participate and contribute. And in communities where they are valued.

Canada's Economic Mobility Pathway Pilot and our leadership in the Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility are a reflection of this mindset shift. We look forward to continued cooperation with the European Commission on migration, refugee protection, and integration. And together, we can find solutions that improve outcomes for refugees, host communities, and countries of origin. Thank you. Merci.