# Title:

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## International Forum on Migration Statistics

## 24 January 2023

## Speaking points

Dear Minister Tohá; Director Wilmoth; Deputy Executive Secretary García-Buchaca, Director General Vitorino; Excellencies, Distinguished Participants; Ladies and Gentlemen:

In 2021, the foreign-born population living in OECD countries reached 138 million, a 33% increase in 15 years.

This trend is here to stay.

In 2022 alone, the OECD counted 4.8 million new permanent immigrants.  And over 5 million people more sought refuge in OECD countries following the war of aggression of Russia against Ukraine.

Migration is an integral part of the social and economic lives of our countries. By monitoring all aspects of migration, we can design better evidence-based policies that make the most of migration for countries of origin, for destination countries and for the migrants themselves.

The International Forum on Migration Statistics, thanks to all of you, has a crucial role to play. The Forum is not just an opportunity for national and international statistical offices, government agencies, international organizations, academia, civil society, and the private sector to exchange on migration measurement systems. It is also a network of actors –who share the common goal of improving migration statistics.

The OECD is fully committed to working with the Forum's partner organisations, IOM and UNDESA, and with all of you, to improve migration monitoring and to support the Global Compact on Migration.

We see three main priorities for this.

**First, it is essential that we keep improving our monitoring of migration flows.** The OECD's *International Migration Outlook* — which celebrated its 46th edition in 2022 — and our regional monitoring system in Asia and Latin America enable us to monitor migration flows in about 80 countries worldwide. But we cannot rest. We need to continue investing in our monitoring systems to ensure they are shock-responsive and future ready.

Since the last International Forum on Migration Statistics, in January 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine.

The pandemic brought international movement to an unprecedented halt in 2020, disrupting migration plans and leaving many migrants unable to return to their countries of origin. The pandemic also brought to light the crucial role of migrants in OECD labour markets. on average 16% of migrants work as frontline workers compared with 13% of the native-born. One in six doctors in OECD countries was born abroad.

Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine led to the largest wave of refugees in Europe since the Second World War.  By mid-November 2022, around 4.7 million refugees from Ukraine had registered for temporary protection in the European Union. About a million had applied to move to non-EU OECD countries including Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Israel.

Fully monitoring in real time such large disruptions in migration flows is challenging. It is only through innovative statistical approaches and international cooperation that we may rise to this challenge.

Data on secondary movements and return migration of populations displaced by conflict are scarce but essential to design effective integration policies. Last year, the OECD partnered with the European Union Agency for Asylum to launch an on-line survey of migrants arriving from Ukraine to collect data directly from the people fleeing the war, including information on their migration plans.

Data on migrant children are also critically limited. Children make up a large part of displaced populations due to conflict better information is essential to tailor policies to the needs of this vulnerable group. The OECD will continue working on closing this gap, through the International Data Alliance for Children on the Move, in collaboration with UNICEF, Eurostat, IOM and UNHCR.

Looking ahead, we also need to ensure that our monitoring systems are fit to capture new forms of mobility, such digital nomads or migrants commuting from country of residence to country of work. We need to accurately measure the movements driven by climate change. We look forward to learning more on the experiences and innovations in Latin America on this topic in the dedicated session.

**A second broad priority we see is improving the monitoring of economic and social the integration of immigrants in the host country.**

Our flagship publication *Settling In* – published jointly with the European Union - monitors the integration of immigrants and their children. Since its first edition, ten years ago, it has expanded to cover a wider range of destination countries and a richer set of integration indicators. Results for the next edition, to be released in May 2023, shows that labour market integration outcomes have improved markedly over the last decade in most OECD countries, despite the negative impact of the pandemic.

To expand on this work, later this year, we will launch the first ever set of indicators on the integration of immigrants in Latin America and the Caribbean, jointly with IDB and UNDP. A preview of the results will be presented tomorrow at the Forum.

Looking forward we need to build on the crucial step forward we took in broadening of the scope of integration beyond the labour market. We need to monitor housing conditions, health status and access to care, education, social and civic engagement in the host country. Only with this information will we be able to adapt integration policies, at the national and subnational level, to increased migration and to migration shocks.

**Third and final priority is making migration statistics an integral part of the migration policy narrative.**

There is a disconnect between migration statistics and the perceptions of individuals in destination countries. Many OECD citizens typically overestimate the share of the immigrant population, and the share of irregular migrants among the immigrant population. Many OECD citizens continue to believe that immigrants are a burden to the welfare state. Yet, data from 25 OECD countries shows that, in 2017, immigrants contributed 547 billion US dollars more in taxes and contributions than governments spent on their social protection, health and education.

We need effective communication strategies to bridge this disconnect.

But we also need to acknowledge that the statistics we produce do not always capture the full reality of migration and fail to address some of the concerns of the public debate. More needs to be done to capture irregular migration and some forms of temporary labour migration, which are blind spots of traditional statistics.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The first edition of the International Forum on Migration Statistics took place in Paris in 2018, we then travelled to Cairo in 2020 and now to Santiago. The OECD is delighted to host the next edition of the Forum which will bring us back to Paris in 2025.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank warmly our partners, IOM and UNDESA with which we have co-organised these events, and ECLAC for hosting this 3rd edition of the Forum.

Gabriela Mistral, first Nobel prize winner for literature from Latin America, famously said: *"Tengo un día. Si lo sé aprovechar, tengo un tesoro" - I have a day. If I know how to make the most of it, I have a treasure.*

With that in mind, let us make the most of the next days.

Thank you