Hello everyone, and welcome to the World Bank Group. We’re very pleased to co-host today’s conference. This gathering comes at a critical moment and gives us the opportunity to remember the possibilities of migration at a time when its perils dominate the headlines.

Conflict and instability in the Middle East and elsewhere have forced millions to flee their homes in search of safety, straining budgets and stretching social fabrics in their host countries. Because of security concerns, nations that have proud histories of welcoming migrants now hesitate.

We’re helping many countries manage this humanitarian and development challenge and opportunity. In the weeks ahead, we'll increase our efforts. Working with partners, we have a moral obligation to provide refugees and the displaced the support they need to survive and build back their lives.

Today’s troubles have obscured important evidence of the benefits of migration. Newcomers often make our countries younger and stronger, and bring diversity and vibrancy to our cultures. One in seven people worldwide is a migrant, making them fundamental parts of our societies. In 1964, I became a migrant when my parents decided to leave the extreme poverty and instability of post-war Korea to give me and my siblings a chance at a better life.
Today, the majority of migrants move within or between developing countries. They need jobs to support themselves and their families; medical clinics and quality schools to ensure their children are healthy and learning; and social safety nets to catch them if they stumble – just as my family did. They often bring with them ideas, skills, energy, and significant economic potential.

Some migrants, of course, do not. This creates valid concerns about the economic, political and even security impact of their arrival. Even migrants who are most intent on contributing to their new homes face integration challenges that can turn into burdens for their communities.

We can make a difference by providing migrants access to the economic, educational and social opportunities available in our societies. They enable migrants to strengthen labor markets, promote innovation, and help countries with aging populations sustain their pension obligations.

In Canada, which enshrines multiculturalism in its laws and constitution, migrants from China, Jamaica, Uganda, Vietnam, and elsewhere have contributed to a dynamic economic, cultural, and political environment. In the 1980s and 1990s, Koreans and Indians who studied and gained valuable professional experience in the United States returned home, helping set off an explosion of technological innovation.

Migrants also have a dramatic impact on the World Bank Group’s goals of ending extreme poverty by 2030 and boosting shared prosperity. Through remittances, they send more than $435 billion dollars each year to developing countries. That’s greater than three times the size of official development assistance.

We’re committed to helping governments make the most of economic migration – not only is it the right thing to do, but it also can increase prosperity. With partners, we support the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development, or KNOMAD, which helps countries develop evidence-based policy options and capacity to reap the benefits of migration.

Our Development Economics research group’s insightful work on remittances has helped to create policies that enhance their impact on development. Our future research agenda aims to build a database that identifies legal and policy restrictions that prevent countries from realizing migration’s possibilities and to develop approaches to education and social policy that facilitate migrants’ integration.
But we need to do more. The number of people moving in search of greater opportunity is very likely to increase going forward. The dramatic income gap between high- and low-income countries means inequality will persist for years. And even if the climate change negotiations in Paris are a success, global warming will force many to migrate to maintain their livelihoods.

So I urge you to use today’s discussions to identify new opportunities for action. Help countries of all income levels tackle some of their toughest development and demographic challenges. Create ways for some of the world’s most vulnerable people to attain lives of greater dignity and opportunity. Working together, you can make the world a more just and prosperous place for migrants, and for all of us. Thank you.