

1. DG's Keynote Speech Script

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor and privilege as the Director General of IOM to address the Third Tokyo Immigration Forum.

I want to thank the Immigration Services Agency of Japan and the Ministry of Justice for giving IOM the opportunity to join this Forum each year.

This Forum is vital, because it brings together leaders of immigration agencies in Asia, Pacific and other regions to discuss many of the critical human mobility issues that the world is facing today.

You're gathering at this Forum at an important time, not just for IOM, but for the prosperity of countries throughout the world and, most importantly, for the people themselves ... the people who have moved, who are going to move or who want to stay.

So I'd like to take a few minutes today to lay out the facts about migration now, the importance of protecting human rights of migrants; and the importance of increasing regular pathways for migrants.

(Global Outlook)

It was not that long ago that migrants became visible, in a very positive way, as "essential" workers every society desperately needed as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold.

And even though the pandemic is now receding in many of our minds, migrants and migration are still an enormous positive force for the world.

Away from the media headlines, the evidence is clear: most migration is regular, it's geographically connected, and it's usually directly related to work.

In fact, when we talk about international migrants -- people who are moving throughout the world --- two-thirds of those migrants are doing so because of work.

And when they do that, they usually stay in their region.

For example, over 40 percent of the world's international migrants are from Asia, but over half of those migrants are living in another Asian country.

In Africa, displacement due to conflict and climate change is playing a significant role, but most people are displaced within their own countries or in a neighboring country. In fact, most international migrants from Africa are moving to another African country.

In Latin America, countries like Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, and Chile are some of the main destination countries of both refugees and migrants within the region.

While most migration is regular, safe and orderly, across the world, because of conflict, climate change, environmental degradation and uneven development, many people have little choice but to find safety and livelihoods elsewhere by moving.

To create a more humane and dignified response, there is more collectively that we must do.

At IOM, our focus is on three main objectives:

Saving lives

Driving solutions for displacement

And facilitating regular pathways so migration can work for all.

(Protection of Human Rights of Migrants)

Our primary objective will always be saving and protecting lives.

Conflict or disasters often come without warning, and people must move. And in those situations, the world looks to IOM.

But we know that if we only focus on humanitarian response, we will not be doing enough. Instead, we need to get smarter, we need to get more strategic, and more innovative, to build solutions by anticipating when people will be compelled to move.

That's where our second objective comes in, driving solutions to displacement. That's why any meaningful solution must look at all facets of the migration journey.

It's especially important when we consider the impact of climate change. That's one of the places where we can start to forecast which communities do not have the resilience they need to respond to a changing environment.

So we are investing in our data and we are investing in partnerships so we can forecast when communities will be at risk of displacement. And then we can build solutions to help them adapt ... and when adaptation is not possible, and that is true for many communities, to help them find solutions to move with dignity.

Throughout any solution, we must protect migrant rights, because migrant rights are human rights.

During the pandemic, many migrants got stranded outside their country of origin, often unable to return home yet also unable to get basic services because they lacked valid identity documents.

The pandemic restrictions are mostly gone, but inadequate immigration and border management systems are now hindering a full post pandemic recovery.

The problem is that policies that cover issues like admission and entry, visas and work are often incoherent across borders. This creates a burden for migrants, making it harder to move for work, to reunite with families, and to return to their country of origin.

For a full and sustainable post pandemic recovery, rights-based identity management systems need to be inclusive, and they need to operate effectively in a wide range of scenarios.

(IOM's vision – regular pathway and recommendations)

Finally, our third priority is facilitating regular pathways for migration. This is the key to making migration truly work for all.

Distinguished participants: If managed well, mobility can be a cornerstone of sustainable development, prosperity, and progress.

The evidence is overwhelming that long-term, regular pathways for migration are better for everyone.

Regular pathways do a better job protecting migrant rights.

Regular pathways do a better job helping governments plan for and manage movements in an orderly way.

And regular pathways make it easier to support economic development in the countries that the migrants are coming from and the countries that migrants are going to.

Regular pathways will create a more stable system, one that builds public confidence, enabling us to change the narrative on migration.

We need to do that because we know, based on demographic data alone, that the world is going to need more migration over the next several decades.

Thirty of the world's largest economies have labor shortages, and the cost of those unfilled jobs is more than 1.3 trillion dollars.

Add to that the aging of many societies, and you can see that many countries will need migrants to keep their economies growing.

On the flip side of the demographic equation, the world now has the largest youth generation in history: 1.8 billion people between the ages of 10 and 24, and most are living in developing countries.

Our goal should be to maximize net gains for all people ... reduce the need for distressed movements ... and respect the human rights and the human dignity of all people.

(Closing)

In closing, I would like to reiterate IOMs commitment to continue our long-standing partnership with the Government of Japan.

We are grateful to you and the people of Japan for your collaboration with us. We look forward to continuing to share our knowledge and experience and continuing to work with you in the years to come.

It is my sincere hope for all of you at the Tokyo Immigration Forum that you will learn from each other, share information and best practices, and promote mutual understanding.

Thank you for all you do to make this world a better place, and to make migration work for all.