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and Citizenship Canada

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**MEMORANDUM TO THE DEPUTY MINISTER**

**IRCC STRATEGIES FOR ASIA AND THE AMERICAS**

**FOR INFORMATION**

**SUMMARY**

- The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with information on the Department's Strategies for Asia and the Americas, which were presented and endorsed by the Issues Management Committee (IMC) on April 12, 2022 (see Annexes A and B). This memorandum is being sent to you in lieu of an ExCom presentation.

**BACKGROUND:**

- The Strategies were developed in consultation with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) branches, staff at missions, Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and Public Safety Canada (PS) to provide cohesive priority-setting frameworks to guide Canada's migration and protection-related diplomacy and cooperation efforts in the Asia and Americas regions. They were designed to complement and align with the Migration and Protection Diplomacy Deck that was endorsed by IRCC's Executive Committee (EXCOM) on March 31, 2021. The Strategies also complement the Regional Engagement Plans led by International Network, and will assist in guiding area directors' annual planning and engagement efforts at missions.

**CURRENT STATUS**

- The IRCC Strategy for Asia reflects the region's critical role in Canada's domestic and international policy objectives both related to migration management, and more broadly linked to the evolving whole-of-government Indo-Pacific strategy. It includes the following objectives:
  - increase collaboration to address irregular migration;
  - promote Canada's existing immigration programs and sharing Canadian best practices for migration management;
  - promote and defend Canadian interests and values by supporting Canadian government priorities and managing bilateral irritants; and

- advance protection measures and responsibility-sharing for refugees and displaced people.
- The IRCC Strategy for the Americas considers the strategic importance of the region due to its geographical proximity and as a key lever in the relationship with the U.S. and provide benefits to the region.
- The Strategy for the Americas considers the following strategic priorities:
  - promote well-managed migration and work to enhance the capacity of countries to address irregular migration flows;
  - promote strong protection systems;
  - promote balanced public narratives on migration and share expertise on effective integration; and
  - increase awareness about Canada's immigration programs to meet our needs.

## **NEXT STEPS**

- The Strategies will be shared with IRCC branches and staff at missions, Canadian Heads of Mission in Asia and the Americas, GAC, CBSA and PS. They are designed to be evergreen and will be updated as necessary according to developments in Asia and the Americas, as well as Government of Canada priorities.
- An action plan will also be shared with branches and missions to guide engagement in support of the strategic priorities for each region, and to outline an approach for tracking activities and outputs in order to measure the effectiveness of this engagement.

Marian Campbell Jarvis

Annexes (2)

A: IRCC Strategy for Asia

B: IRCC Strategy for the Americas

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# IRCC Strategy for Asia

*International and Intergovernmental  
Relations Branch*

June 2022

# IRCC Strategy for Asia – Executive Summary

## Issue:

The Asia region is critical to Canada’s domestic and international policy objectives related to migration management. Careful strategic planning and focused engagement with key partners is required to maximize the effectiveness of Canada’s diplomacy in Asia in the area of migration policy and refugee protection.

## Objectives:

- **Leverage migration and protection diplomacy** as a way to advance Canada’s strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific, including strengthening IRCC’s relationship with key strategic Asian partners by identifying opportunities for engagement in the areas of migration policy and refugee protection.
- **Maximize the effectiveness of Canada’s resources for engagement in Asia** in the areas of migration policy and refugee protection by focusing on Strategic Priorities and key partners to ensure that efforts are directed toward engagements that can have the greatest impact.
- **Promote Canada’s migration approaches and principles** to facilitate safe, orderly, and regular migration while deterring irregular migration; provide refugee protection for migrants who genuinely require it and advance programs in Canada’s economic interest (e.g. economic immigration, business visitors and students).
- **Protect the safety and security of Canadians** by collaborating with Asian partners on migration integrity, security and irregular migration.

## Strategic Priorities:

Increase collaboration to address irregular migration, including removals cooperation in the region

Promote and defend Canadian values and interests, including the integrity of our immigration programs

Promote and defend Canadian values and interests, including the integrity of our immigration programs

Advance international protection for refugees, the stateless and displaced populations

## Areas of engagement:

- **Raise awareness** about the impact of irregular migration and implement deterrence efforts through active engagement in regional and multilateral forums.
- **Engage target countries** on removals cooperation and improve the migration relationship including through capacity building initiatives.
- **Build and maintain alliances** with other countries that will help Canada mitigate irregular migration to our shores.

- **Promote** Canada’s economic immigration programs to meet multi-year levels planning, labour market demands and build innovative businesses.
- **Promote** Canada as a destination for students. All the while, also reuniting family members and fulfilling Canada’s humanitarian commitments.
- **Encourage** Asian partners to develop additional regular migration pathways.
- **Share** Canada’s knowledge and experience on our managed migration model and the policies and programs that underlie it to strengthen regional migration policies.

- **Support** Canadian government priorities as required (i.e. Afghanistan response; special measures for Hong Kong residents, and advancing Indo-Pacific interests)
- **Share** Canada’s knowledge and expertise in the area of program integrity and raise awareness about fraudulent documents and consultants.
- **Manage** bilateral irritants including on visa issues and processing, and stress that our policies and programs are designed to maintain the program integrity of our immigration system.

- **Share** Canada’s experience and knowledge in the area of international protection and support countries considering establishing or expanding protection policies or programming.
- **Work** with partner countries and organizations to seek comprehensive refugee responses.
- **Demonstrate** Canadian humanitarian leadership by responding to emerging priority resettlement populations in the region (e.g. Afghanistan, Myanmar and Bangladesh).

## Objectives

The significant economic growth of countries like China and India have transformed relations in Asia and beyond, with current projections indicating China's economy is likely to overtake that of the US by 2028. This shift has reinforced the importance of adapting Canada's engagement with Asian countries to advance its interests and priorities, including in the area of migration.

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a cohesive priority-setting framework to advance Canada's migration and protection-related diplomacy and cooperation objectives in Asia. In doing so, this strategy complements the Global Affairs Canada-led Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) currently under development.

Canada's migration and protection diplomacy in Asia includes outreach, engagement and liaison work with a focus on addressing visa processing and operational issues and, in a few cases, on an exchange of information on policies and best practices (e.g. Japan and South Korea). While IRCC does not have policy-oriented postings in Asia, as the International Network (IN) shifts their presence and role abroad, including with the addition of Global Engagement Coordinators (GECOs)<sup>1</sup>, the department will be better positioned to support engagement by playing a consistent, active role in outreach and advocacy. This strategy proposes a continuation and limited expansion of the migration and protection engagement work in the region. It is an opportunity for IRCC to focus current and future efforts into concrete strategic priorities, while providing a common mechanism for tracking results and outcomes.

This Strategy will guide IRCC's approach to migration and protection diplomacy in Asia and complement other departmental strategies such as the multilateral engagement strategy, as well as the GAC-led Indo-Pacific Strategy.

### Objectives of the Strategy:

1. Leverage migration and protection diplomacy as a way to advance Canada's strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific, including strengthening IRCC's relationship with key strategic Asian partners by identifying opportunities for engagement in the areas of migration policy and refugee protection.
2. Maximize the effectiveness of Canada's resources for engagement in Asia in the areas of refugee protection and migration policy by focusing on Strategic Priorities and key partners to ensure that efforts are directed to engagements that can have the greatest impact.
3. Promote Canada's migration approaches and principles, to facilitate safe, orderly, and regular migration while deterring irregular migration; provide refugee protection for

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<sup>1</sup> IN's Area Director Advisors serve as Global Engagement Coordinators (GECOs), coordinating engagement related activities in the region to support implementation of IRCC's Regional Strategies and Engagement Plans.

migrants who genuinely require it and advance programs in Canada's economic interest (e.g. economic immigration, business visitors and students).

4. Protect the safety and security of Canadians by collaborating with Asian partners on migration integrity, security and irregular migration.

To achieve these objectives, the Strategy will be accompanied by an action plan that includes initiatives to advance Canada's position and programs for migration and refugee protection, exchange best practices with Asian partners, and continue building relationships.

## Context

### *Regional Landscape*

Home to over half of the global population, Asia was the origin of over 30% of the world's international migrants in 2020. It is also a significant source of migration to Canada, which supports Canada's economic growth and addresses its demographic challenges. More than 50% of new permanent residents and students to Canada between January 2015 and November 2020 came from Asia.

Primary drivers for the movement of such large numbers of people include conflict and the desire for better educational and economic opportunities. Another emerging driver of migration is climate change and natural disasters. These drivers also influence the choice of destination for Asian migrants. For example, temporary labour migrants largely work in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and some developed Asian economies, particularly within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) economic community. For many advanced industrialized nations, including in Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, Asian migrants dominate inflows of permanent residents and students.

Many Asian countries experience both emigration and immigration. Nonetheless, it is possible to differentiate between mainly destination countries or regions (for example Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan), countries or regions with both significant immigration and emigration (Hong Kong, Malaysia, India, and Kazakhstan), and mainly source countries (Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam). Some countries in the region have also become centres of economic growth—particularly Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia—and are experiencing mass urbanization while attracting increasing numbers of migrant workers from other countries. The magnitude of intra-ASEAN migration will likely increase as the ASEAN economic community seeks not only a more integrated regional economic strategy, but also the free mobility of professionals and skilled workers within the region.

Facing similar demographic challenges to Canada, countries such as Japan and South Korea have passed new immigration laws or implemented programs meant to attract foreign workers to replace the ageing work force. Reforms introduced in Japan in 2019 expanded the numbers and types of migrants that will be welcomed, including 345,000 foreign workers by 2025 to fill labour

shortages in farming, construction, accommodations and elder care. Similarly, the South Korean labour migration system has expanded since the mid-2000s, primarily with the admission of temporary foreign workers for low to medium skilled jobs. Together, these reforms are part of a slow but recognizable trend towards increased regular migration pathways in the region.

### *China and India*

With long histories of migration to Canada spanning more than a century—and given their sheer demographic size—China and India are today two of the most important countries in the region for immigration to Canada. India ranks as Canada’s top source country across all of IRCC’s major lines of business. At pre-pandemic levels, in 2019, approximately, 650,000 temporary residence (TR) applications (visitor, students, workers) were received from Indian nationals and 85,000 Permanent Resident (PR) admissions came from India, representing 25% of IRCC’s total PR admissions. At the same time, China is the second top source country for new permanent residents, the third largest source of tourism, and Canada’s second largest international student source country. These pre-pandemic trends are expected to continue and potentially increase as borders reopen, although Canada is interested in diversifying source countries for certain programs, including students.

China and India are politically and economically important to Canada and the respective people-to-people ties are fundamental elements of both the Canada-India and Canada-China relationships. Despite the September 2021 release of Huawei CEO, Ms. Meng Wanzhou and Canadians Mr. Michael Kovrig and Mr. Michael Spavor, their arrests and detention since 2018 have significantly strained the Canada-China bilateral relationship. The relationship dynamic was further complicated by Canada’s statements expressing serious concern at the passage of the national security legislation in Hong Kong and sanctions related to China’s treatment of its Uyghur population. While the Canada-India bilateral relationship remains strong in certain areas with a mutual desire to deepen shared interests in a free and open Indo-Pacific, there remain ongoing bilateral irritants, including linked to immigration. .

### *Refugee Protection and Human Rights*

Violent conflict, political persecution, human rights violations and social exclusion are significant drivers of migration in the Asia region. There are currently 9.2 million people of concern to UNHCR across Asia and the Pacific, including 4.4 million refugees and asylum-seekers, 3.3 million internally displaced people and 2.3 million stateless persons.<sup>2</sup> While the majority of Asian nation states are not signatories of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, many host displaced populations and recognize people as refugees both formally and informally. Natural disasters are also a significant trigger for displacement in the region, and the effects of climate change may exacerbate future impacts of disasters.

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<sup>2</sup> “Asia and the Pacific,” The UN Refugee Agency, 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/asia-and-the-pacific.html>

Over the past year there have been growing calls from domestic and international stakeholders for Canada to take decisive action to address emerging human rights situations in Asia. Of particular note is the violence and deteriorating human rights situation in Afghanistan with the resurgence of the Taliban. IRCC is working actively to support the resettlement of Afghans with a Canadian nexus, such as past interpreters, as well as vulnerable Afghans. IRCC is also engaging with Afghan refugee transit countries in Asia and allies to support stability in the region and address the significant resettlement needs of the Afghan population.

Other noteworthy populations of concern include the people of Hong Kong following the imposition in June 2020 of national security legislation by China, and Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang Province, China. The announcement by the Government of Canada on November 12, 2020 of special immigration measures for certain Hong Kong residents was unprecedented in terms of providing a tailored and direct migration response to a situation abroad

The Rohingya crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh is another significant priority for Canada. In 2017, Myanmar's military forces initiated operations targeting Rohingya populations in Rakhine State, precipitating a refugee crisis that saw more than 742,000 refugees flee to neighbouring Bangladesh. Approximately 884,000 refugees remain in Bangladesh, wholly dependent on the international community for humanitarian assistance to cover their basic needs. There are also significant numbers of Rohingya in Thailand and Malaysia. Canada has played a leadership role in responding to the Rohingya situation and is working to alleviate the humanitarian crisis while encouraging positive political developments in Myanmar.

Many Asian countries struggle with irregular migration within the region. Indonesia has increasingly become a transit country for the smuggling by sea of mostly ethnic Rohingya and Bangladeshi labour migrants on route to Malaysia, a major destination country for irregular labour migrants. North America also remains a popular destination for smuggled migrants from South Asia and East Asia.

#### **Canada's response to the situation in Afghanistan:**

Following the withdrawal of international forces in August 2021 and with the Taliban in control of the country, the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated significantly and rapidly. Afghanistan is experiencing a humanitarian crisis, including political, social and economic insecurity. Afghans already constitute one of the world's largest refugee populations, with more than 2.2 million refugees in neighbouring Pakistan alone, and 5.5 million internally displaced persons in Afghanistan. The majority of vulnerable Afghans are still inside Afghanistan and new Afghan refugee outflows to neighbouring countries, are still nascent. Due to this deteriorating security situation and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, the Government of Canada responded with urgency. There was an urgent need to support locally engaged staff and Afghan nationals who had supported Canadian efforts such as interpreters or contractors. In coordination with GAC and DND, IRCC began to implement special immigration measures



to evacuate and resettle at risk Afghan nationals, resulting in 3,000 landings before the air-bridge closed on August 31, 2021. A subsequent humanitarian commitment was made in January 2022 to resettle 86,300 refugees by the end of 2025, including vulnerable populations, such as human rights defenders, journalists, women leaders, LGBTQI individuals, and members of religious and ethnic groups.

IRCC is working to meet the Government's commitments. These efforts are under way and will have significant implications for the department's operational and processing capabilities, as well as for settlement once the individuals arrive safely in Canada. The department is also engaging with neighbouring countries and key partners to encourage collaboration with resettlement efforts, to support efforts to address shared challenges and to further promote global responsibility sharing.

## Strategic Priorities

Through its well-managed migration system—including legal pathways for work, study, family unification and humanitarian responses, as well as integration programming for newcomers—Canada shows that migration is key to prosperity and that diversity is a source of strength. In a rapidly evolving Asian context, Canada can leverage its position as a world leader on migration to promote immigration to Canada while continuing to provide support to Asian countries in finding solutions to the migration challenges they face. Towards these ends, IRCC will focus on the four Strategic Priorities listed below. Key countries in the region, including **India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines**, will be engaged proactively when there are opportunities to cooperate on one or more of these priorities.

### Strategic Priorities

**1) Increase collaboration to address irregular migration, including removals cooperation in the region:** Despite growing efforts by Asian countries to address labour gaps, counter irregular migration, and combat human trafficking, there continues to be a shortage of comprehensive policies related to international migration and a lack of policies to curb undocumented cross-border migration within the region. Canada's engagement in Asia will focus on raising awareness of the negative impact of irregular migration and on advancing deterrence efforts. Canada will also support and encourage the region to develop its own regional frameworks for addressing migration challenges and advancing regular migration pathways. In addition to work being done bilaterally to address these issues, IRCC will also engage with Asian partners in regional and multilateral forums.

Canada is also supporting capacity-building efforts in targeted countries, which beyond their direct results, also aim to advance the migration relationship and removals cooperation. This

type of collaboration is of strategic importance to Canada as countries in the Asia region represent half of the top ten largest caseloads in CBSA's removal working inventory.

**2) Support temporary and permanent migration from Asia while sharing Canada's knowledge and best practices with managed migration:** As part of IRCC's migration and diplomacy objectives, staff at missions in the region will continue to conduct promotion and outreach with local partners and government officials on migration matters, including with countries increasingly interested in Canada's immigration system such as Japan and South Korea. IRCC is also aiming to promote Canada's existing programs for temporary and permanent migration to a diverse range of countries in line with Canadian interests, such as addressing labour market needs in key economic sectors such as agriculture, information and technology, and caregivers. Additionally, IRCC is aiming to increase student-related efforts in the Indo-Pacific region in by supporting diversified recruitment, increasing facilitation and engagement, processing, as well as related program integrity activities. Those efforts would support both the government's International Education Strategy as well as the evolving Indo-Pacific Strategy. These combined efforts will support multi-year levels implementation, including to meet labour market demands and build innovative businesses, while reuniting family members and fulfilling Canada's humanitarian commitments.

Canada can also share lessons learned with the region on economic migration pathways, including from initiatives such the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot and the Atlantic Immigration Program, which aim to meet regional economic development and labour market needs, with a focus on settlement, integration, and retention of newcomers in regions and communities traditionally underserved by immigration. This engagement with Asian partners will allow Canada to encourage the development of additional regular migration pathways within the region, and learn from experiences of its Asian counterparts.

**3) Promote and defend Canadian values and interests, including the integrity of our immigration programs.** This priority aims to support Canadian foreign policy, realize related goals in IRPA and relevant border legislation, and maintain and improve bilateral relations with Asian countries. IRCC plays a role in the broader Canadian foreign policy landscape by providing support to government priorities as required. The most notable Asian example in recent years is the suite of immigration measures for certain Hong Kong residents launched in 2020 and 2021 in response to the imposition of the National Security Law adopted in June 2020. Other political developments in the region have similarly prompted IRCC engagement and policy development, such as the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, it is important to maintain support for Canada's temporary and permanent resident programs and immigration system and to ensure national security, so that the integrity of our migration programs is respected. Asia is both home to some of Canada's highest and lowest risk source countries. Migration push factors such as unemployment, political and economic instability, corruption and the prevalence of unreliable documentation have led to high incidents of fraud and non-genuine applications. As we diversify our intake markets in Asia and as processing volumes continue to increase, IRCC will need to ensure

program integrity keeps pace. To mitigate related risks, IRCC will support program integrity activities, such as focussed engagement with select countries and relevant partners to both promote anti-fraud measures and collaborative efforts to detect fraud (e.g. probe further into allegations of abuse).

Finally, IRCC will continue to manage visa-related bilateral irritants using existing fora and channels of communications to manage expectations and provide information about Canada's immigration system. Visa processing and client service have been long-standing bilateral irritants with several key partners. While remaining sensitive to these concerns, Canada must stress that our policies and programs are designed to maintain the program integrity of our immigration system and welcome those who will bring their skills and knowledge to support and enhance Canada's future.

**4) Advance international protection for refugees, the stateless and displaced populations.** In keeping with the collective political will and ambition expressed in the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR), Canada supports the revitalization of the international protection regime, including support for growth in global resettlement capacity and long-lasting and durable solutions to refugee crises. This strategic priority is meant to enable greater protection space globally while ensuring that Canada maintains access to populations of concern and is able to ensure resettlement to Canada where necessary. Responsibility sharing is of strategic importance, as asylum claims from Asia-Pacific made up 18% of total claims in Canada between 2015 and 2020. Canada will engage strategically with Asian countries and collaborate with international organizations such as UNHCR and IOM, as appropriate, to uphold the obligations of the 1951 Refugee Convention and continue to share its knowledge and best practices on refugee protection.

Canada is also interested in engagement with refugee-hosting nations to strengthen partnerships relating to refugees. Toward this end, IRCC is engaging with Pakistan and Central Asian countries. Some other countries in the region—notably Japan and South Korea—have slowly begun to expand refugee resettlement opportunities, presenting Canada with opportunities to advocate for growth in global resettlement capacity and a whole-of-society approach to refugee protection. This will be particularly relevant in light of the potential for future flows of Afghan refugees into neighbouring countries following the re-emergence of the Taliban.

## Approach

The Government of Canada will proactively advance the Strategic Priorities above and will prioritize requests for engagement from Asian partners based on these areas.

To achieve these priorities, the Strategy will leverage different mechanisms including:

**Action plan:** An annual action plan will be prepared to guide and track progress and initiatives to advance Canada's position on migration and refugee protection, exchange best practices with Asian partners, and continue strong relationship building. The action plan will outline the activities and expected outputs associated with the strategic priorities, inform those involved of the scope and frequency of our engagements with Asian partners, and used to track achievements based on a performance framework. Annual reporting based on the action plan will include activities implemented under the International Network's annual engagement plans for staff at IRCC missions in Asia, which align with this Strategy's priorities and covers the full array of operational priorities.

**Bilateral engagement:** IRCC will proactively engage key partner countries in the region where there are clear intersects to cooperate on one or more of the Strategic Priorities. This includes engagement with **India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines**. IRCC will prioritize invitations and requests for engagement that align with priorities laid out in the Strategy. Incoming delegations and study tours will be considered when largely in alignment with components of the Strategy. Furthermore, IRCC will engage with Migration 5 partners to discuss collaborative efforts in the region and to ensure proper coordination with like-minded countries.

**Capacity Building:** Through the Migration Cooperation and Engagement Envelope, IRCC will work closely with CBSA and GAC to harness capacity building funding in specific target countries to support of improved migration relationships and removals cooperation. Projects will be selected both on the basis of the direct results they expect to achieve and also their ability to generate cooperation with targeted countries on Government of Canada priorities, including removals. Limited funding may also be available via IRCC's International Migration Capacity Building Program.

**Promoting Canadian positions and programs:** IRCC will engage Asian partners bilaterally and multilaterally on Canada's approach to international migration governance in order to identify common positions and build bridges with countries with differing perspectives. For example, the Tokyo Immigration Forum, which will be launched in March 2022, could be a venue to further this type of engagement. Canada will also continue to share information with a diverse range of Asian countries about pathways to Canada for economic and family-class immigrants, visitors, international students, and temporary workers. IRCC will also continue to promote inclusion, respect for diversity and human rights, and upholding international humanitarian and refugee protection obligations as core values shared by Canadians that have shaped Canada's immigration landscape.

**Exchanging best practices:** The department will engage with Asian countries bilaterally and multilaterally to exchange best practices and to support one another, as appropriate, in the development of respective labour migration, refugee and resettlement policies, and our efforts to manage irregular migration. Canada's engagement in this area will be both *demand driven*, by prioritizing countries that have actively expressed interest in learning from Canada, and

*proactive*, in strategically reaching out to partners with whom Canada would like to cooperate with.

**Building strong relationships:** Canada will continue to develop and maintain robust relationships with Asian partners through engagement on migration issues, notwithstanding their current views on migration. Cultivating relationships such as those already in place with India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines will allow IRCC to continue work to promote Canada as a destination for students, workers and visitors. IRCC will continue to engage with bilateral partners through our missions in Asia, as well as with High Commissions and Embassies in Ottawa. These established relationships will allow IRCC to defend Canadian interests including by stressing program integrity when faced with allegations of unfavourable visa processes towards Asian applicants and by ensuring that Embassies and High Commissions have an accurate understanding of Canadian visa processes and are provided with information to share with their clients. When it comes to China, recognizing the limited scope for migration diplomacy, engagement will likely continue to remain transactional in nature and in support of effective program delivery. Finally, close relationships with those countries selected for engagement under the Migration Cooperation and Engagement Envelope (MCEE) will allow Canada to ensure that our migration capacity building initiatives are effective, and that they can be leveraged to support other Canadian objectives.

## Roles and Responsibilities

Implementation of *IRCC's Strategy for Asia* is undertaken by multiple branches across headquarters and the department's staff abroad. While IRCC's **International and Intergovernmental Relations Branch (IIR)** will lead on maintaining the Strategy, coordinate the monitoring of progress on deliverables, support planned activities, and engage with Asian partners in Canada and abroad, other branches are equally key to the Strategy's implementation. IRCC's **International Network (IN)**, through missions such as Delhi, Hong Kong, Manila and Beijing, are already playing an active role on many of these issues and activities, and will be key players in implementing this Strategy across all priorities. Missions in Asia will be asked to continue their role in outreach, and advocacy of Canadian positions, recognizing the priorities laid out in this Strategy.

**Integrity Risk Management Branch (IRM)** will also be central to supporting the integrity-related aspects of Strategic Priority #3, including by monitoring for integrity risks of interest, disseminating information and intelligence to our officers on the front-line who have a presence in the region, and raising awareness on the trends relating to Asian nationalities. **Refugee Affairs Branch (RAB)** will continue to play a key role in guiding Canada's protection-related engagement and policy activities in relation to Strategic Priority #4. **Immigration Branch (IB)** will also contribute, for example by sharing presentations and documentation to help ensure that GAC's trade commissioners and employees working at missions in Asia, have the tools to promote the various business pathways to Canada.

While IRCC is responsible for leading the Government of Canada's international migration and protection policy activities, close collaboration with other Government of Canada departments, including **GAC, CBSA and PS**, will be vital to its implementation. IRCC will make tools available, including speaking points and presentations, to support GAC and others in implementing the Strategy abroad.

### **Measuring Success**

To measure the success of this Strategy, all those involved will be asked to track a number of indicators against the four Strategic Priorities. Branches and missions will be asked to record the following indicators for their activities in the designated section of the Action Plan, and to provide an updated Action Plan on a bi-annual basis.

- **Event size:** Records the scale of an activity, as Small (0-10), Medium (10-50), or Large (50+).
- **Context/timing/target:** Records environmental factors including the modality of engagement as well as reason behind, timing of and target audience for the activity.
- **Moderated/Presented:** A qualitative description of whether Canada acted as a resource or leader for an activity or simply was present/participated.
- **Citations:** Records when Canada or a representative is cited in media, social media, reports or other publications as a result of our activities.
- **Outcome:** Records policy and program changes and metrics that indicate influence of Canadian activities, or if not available, records qualitative description of the practical impact of the activity.
- **Improvement in quality of applications/compliance with IRPA/IRPR** (e.g. change in approval rates and why).

### **Risks and Limitations**

### Implications of COVID-19 Pandemic

Beginning in early 2020, countries around the world, including Canada, entered into a prolonged period of lockdown with border closures in an attempt to slow or prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Novel Coronavirus). This unprecedented pandemic has impacted travel and border management and had a significant effect on the global economy. It is likely that migration patterns around the world will shift as a result, and new migration-related challenges are likely to occur. Opportunities for engagement on migration issues will also be affected as travel is constrained and as governments turn their focus to stimulus and to shielding their own citizens from health and economic harm. Efforts are underway to mitigate the potential negative impact on bilateral relationships stemming from strict border measures, including evolving measures to better accommodate students and improved accessibility to Canada for humanitarian cases. Work is also underway bilaterally and multilaterally to support Proof of Vaccine Credentials recognition.

Despite the opportunities for Canadian engagement with Asia on protection and migration, several risks and limitations must be acknowledged. These factors present a significant challenge to meeting the objectives outlined in this Strategy.

Canada faces a very different migration reality than many Asian states, underlined by unique economic conditions and security contexts. Canada's approach to migration has emerged out of a very specific set of historical, social, and geographic circumstances, and Canadian experiences and best practices may not be applicable in certain partners' contexts. These factors will limit the ability of Canada to promote the principles of safe, orderly, and regular migration. The economic, geographic, and developmental diversity of the region—and the highly differentiated nature of Canada's bilateral relationships within it—means that any application of the priorities in this Strategy will need to be tailored to the unique context of each country. More fundamentally, not all interlocutors will be receptive to migration and protection diplomacy that does not align with competing national priorities or prevailing political leanings.

The demographic size and economic dynamism of Asia also means that there is significant and increasing competition for skilled immigration both from within and outside of the region. As Canada works to promote and advance programs in Canada's economic interests—including economic immigration, students, and business visitors—it must continue to compete with partners who also boast large-scale immigration programs, including Australia and the United Kingdom. Equally, as Canada works to encourage the development of increased regular migration pathways with partners in the region, it will also have to compete with Asian countries joining the global competition for talent.

Due to regional instability, it is likely that future emerging crises in Asia will require IRCC attention and response in ways that cannot be predicted. There is a risk that responses—such as those undertaken for the situations in Afghanistan and Hong Kong—will displace other valuable

migration and protection diplomacy work. These crises can also contribute to irregular migration flows and challenge the integrity and security of Canada's migration programs.

Finally, the level of resources available for collaboration and cooperation in the areas of refugee protection and migration are limited. The purpose of this strategy is in part to help match Canadian engagement to available resources with the aim of achieving concrete results. This will also mean some areas of potential cooperation and collaboration may need to be set aside.

In summary, there are many unknown factors that may impact this Strategy, including:

- the consequences of COVID-19 on labour mobility, migration and refugee protection policies and practices;
- the future of regular and irregular migration flows from and within the region;
- the future of Canada's bilateral relationship with China and the consequences of China's increased ambition in the region, as well as its relationship with the United States
- the development of various conflicts or instability in the region and the potential for natural disasters;
- the interest of some countries to increase collaborative efforts with Canada;
- and to what extent ASEAN and its member states will continue to work towards increased sub-regional mobility.

This continually evolving Asian context will require adjustments to the Strategy and to Canadian activities over time in the region.



**Annex A – Highlights of IRCC's Current Engagement**

A few of IRCC's current, ongoing bilateral engagements already support the four Strategic Priorities identified for IRCC's future engagement in Asia. It is important to note that IRCC engagement is often driven by responsive requests and relates to bilateral irritants including visa processing times, particularly from important source countries. Proactive engagement takes place in support of the Government of Canada's (GC) efforts to deter irregular migration and to remove failed asylum claimants to countries that offer limited cooperation to the CBSA, particularly in cases where returnees do not possess valid travel documents. The table below provides some select examples of how the department will continue to advance Canada's interests:

Current Activities	Timeframe	Aligns with IRCC Strategic Priority	Additional Considerations
Afghanistan	Ongoing	Strategic Priority 4	Through the establishment of the special immigration program and the special humanitarian program, IRCC is working to meet the Government of Canada's commitment to resettle up to 40,000 at risk Afghan nationals. These efforts have significant implications for the department's operational and processing capabilities, as well as settlement implications once the individuals arrive safely in Canada. Significant bilateral engagement with host government in the regions is required to facilitate movement of individuals and to provide stable processing platform outside of Afghanistan.
Pakistan	Ongoing	Strategic Priority 4	Canada is engaging with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan from multiple perspectives, including as a refugee-hosting nation/ Afghan refugee transit country in the aftermath of the rise of the Taliban and related Afghan refugee outflows, as well as with capacity building support to strengthen our overall migration relationship.
India	Ongoing	Strategic Priority 1, 2	IRCC Delhi maintains regular engagement with local partners and government on migration-related matters. IRCC also engages bilaterally with India on an ad hoc basis to manage bilateral irritants and through GAC-led mechanisms such as the Canada-India Consular dialogue, which includes a number of immigration related items.
Bangladesh		Strategic Priority 1, 3, 4	IRCC engages with Bangladesh in international forums such as the Friends of Migration group and the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), in particular the GFMD Working Group on Public Narratives on Migration that Canada currently co-chairs. IRCC is also working to build more positive relations with Bangladesh in the short term to advance interests related to the Rohingya refugee crisis and will be investing in migration-related capacity building in that country.
China	Ongoing	Strategic Priority 2	IRCC engages bilaterally with China on an ad hoc basis to manage bilateral irritants such as visa processing times and through GAC led mechanisms such as the Canada-China Consular Consultations.
Japan	Ongoing	Strategic Priority 2, 3, 4	IRCC Tokyo maintains regular engagement with local partners and government on migration matters such as refugee resettlement and economic programs. IRCC also engages bilaterally with Japan on an ad hoc basis to manage bilateral irritants and through GAC-led mechanisms such as the Canada-Japan Joint Economic Committee.
Philippines	Ongoing	Strategic Priority 2	IRCC Manila maintains regular engagement with local partners and government on migration-related matters such as temporary and permanent economic migration. IRCC also engages bilaterally with the Philippines on an ad hoc basis to manage bilateral irritants and through GAC-led mechanisms such as the Canada Philippines Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation, which discusses migration issues.
South Korea	Ongoing	Strategic Priority 2, 3&4	IRCC maintains regular engagement with local partners and government on migration related matters such as settlement and integration, refugee resettlement and citizenship. IRCC also engages bilaterally with South Korea on an ad hoc basis to manage bilateral irritants and through GAC-led mechanisms such as the Canada-South Korea Strategic Dialogue, which discusses migration issues.

**Annex B – Action Plan – To Follow**

An action plan will be developed to proactively guide bilateral engagement in support of the four Strategic Priorities for Engagement. The action plan outlines activities and expected outputs associated with the Priorities.

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# IRCC Strategy for the Americas

*International and Intergovernmental  
Relations Branch*

June 2022

## Issue:

The Americas region is a key strategic partner for Canada given its geographic proximity, and Canada benefits from a stable Hemisphere. Careful strategic planning and focused engagement with key partners are required to maximize the effectiveness of Canada's engagement and diplomacy in the Americas in the areas of refugee protection and migration policy.

## Objectives:

- **Maximise** the effectiveness of Canada's engagement in the Americas **by focusing on strategic priorities and key partners** to ensure that efforts are targeting engagements that can have the greatest impact.
- **Demonstrate** Canada's commitment to building a world where **diversity and inclusion** are promoted and celebrated, **the benefits of regular migration** are recognized and refugee protection norms are upheld.
- Maintain the integrity of Canada's immigration system **by promoting regular pathways for migration, addressing irregular migration** and by helping partner countries to develop or **strengthen their migration and protection systems** through targeted capacity building.
- **Cooperate** with countries of the Americas to identify engagement opportunities to help address **protection** for refugees and persons of concern in the context of international commitments, norms, and the Global Compact on Refugees.
- **Leverage** and enhance current **cooperation with the U.S. and Mexico** including through the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) and the Comprehensive Regional Framework for Protection and Solutions (MIRPS), to maximize Canada's impact in the region.

## Strategic Priorities:

**Promote well-managed migration systems in the region and enhance capacity of countries to address irregular migration flows before they reach North America**

**Promote strong protection systems aligned with international commitments and norms, and the Global Compact on Refugees**

**Promote balanced public narratives on migration and share expertise on effective integration of migrants in support of a stable Hemisphere**

**Increase awareness about Canada's immigration programs to both meet our most critical needs and provide benefits to the region**

## Areas of Engagement:

- Continue **engaging** and supporting partner countries to share **best practices** on areas such as labor migration policies, visa policy and processing and travel document integrity.
- Support **capacity building** initiatives aimed at addressing irregular migration at source and in transit states and improving asylum systems and protection in key countries such as Mexico, Costa Rica and Panama.
- **Strengthen collaboration** through established **mobility dialogues** (Mexico, Brazil, CARICOM)
- **Raise awareness about the impact of irregular migration**, including extra-continental irregular migration, and the need for **collective action through active engagement in the RCM** and other multilateral forums.
- Enhance the delivery of **refugee protection** by supporting the regional application of the MIRPS regional protection and solutions framework.
- **Support** new collaborative **regional initiatives** that contribute to addressing large-scale forced displacements in and from Central America and Mexico.
- **Encourage** emerging **resettlement** efforts from regional countries and lay the basis for expansion of **complementary pathways** for refugees.
- In light of the **mass migration flows** in the region such as the **Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant crisis**, share Canada's integration approach and best practices in settlement and integration with host countries to maximize the benefits of migration, promote inclusion and combat xenophobia.
- Support communication efforts in the region with regard to migration narratives as well as the risks of irregular migration.
- **Promote** programs for **temporary migration** to contribute to addressing labor market needs focusing on key economic sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, IT, and health services.
- **Showcase** Canada as a key destination for **education and students**.
- **Promote regular mobility** while preserving the integrity of Canada's immigration system including through engagement on appropriate screening and visa policies, encouraging other countries to strengthen their approaches.

## Objectives of the Strategy

Canada is recognized for its merit based immigration system, its support for inclusive integration, and its human rights focused policies. Canada is also recognized for its leadership in advocacy, promotion, and support of the international protection regime. In view of shifting migration and protection challenges in the Americas, it is important for Canada to demonstrate its commitment to supporting regular migration pathways, while also signalling a strong message of deterrence against irregular migration, and to the provision of protection to asylum seekers and refugees in accordance with international obligations and norms. This Strategy will guide Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)'s approach to migration and protection diplomacy in the Americas and complement other Departmental strategies.

The purpose of this Strategy is to provide a cohesive priority-setting framework to direct Canada's migration and protection-related outreach and cooperation efforts in the Americas<sup>1</sup>. It does not propose a significant shift away from the migration and protection engagement that Canada, led by IRCC, is already doing. Rather, the Strategy proposes to focus these efforts on four strategic priorities, while providing a common mechanism for tracking results and outcomes.

### Objectives:

1. Maximise the effectiveness of Canada's engagement in the Americas by focusing on Strategic Priorities and key partners to ensure that efforts are targeting engagements that can have the greatest impact.
2. Demonstrate Canada's commitment to building a world where diversity and inclusion are promoted and celebrated, the benefits of regular migration are recognized and refugee protection norms are upheld.
3. Maintain the integrity of Canada's immigration system by promoting regular pathways for migration, addressing irregular migration and by helping partner countries to develop or strengthen their migration and protection systems through targeted capacity building.
4. Cooperate with countries of the Americas to identify engagement opportunities to help address protection for refugees and persons of concern in the context of international commitments, norms, and the Global Compact on Refugees.
5. Leverage and enhance current cooperation with the U.S. and Mexico including through the RCM and MIRPS, to pursue broader regional engagement and maximize Canada's impact in the region.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this Strategy, the Americas region is defined as encompassing all countries in the Western Hemisphere (including the Caribbean), with the exception of the U.S. and Canada. Likewise, this Strategy does not encompass British, French and Dutch overseas territories in the Western Hemisphere. It is however important to situate Canada's efforts under this Strategy in the context of cooperation with the U.S. and leverage efforts and investments they will make to address irregular migration in the Hemisphere, and in Central America more particularly.

## Context

The Americas region is a culturally, economically, linguistically and geographically diverse area. Despite the diversity of the region, however, the majority of countries in the Americas are experiencing and have been influenced by migration and forced displacement. The mass movement of people in, out, and through the region has been a staple of its history, shaping local economies, and societal make-up.

Migration and forced displacement flows in the region have long been characterized by a predominantly South–North flow of migrants notably heading towards the United States. In recent decades, there has also been a significant increase in intra-regional mixed movements composed of both migrants, and refugees. This change is driven by a variety of factors, including higher rates of economic growth among some countries within South and Central America, varying levels of socio-economic and political instability, climate change, as well as the adoption of more liberal immigration reforms and protection policies in several states, which have transformed some former origin and transit countries into countries of destination. Examples of this include the large scale movement of Venezuelans within the region as well as the movement of Haitians, first to South America and more recently from there northward. While the Americas as a whole remains a net exporter of migrants and flows towards and across the U.S. southern border continue, the growth of intra-regional migration and displacement evident in recent decades is also expected to continue.

In addition, there is also an increasing trend being witnessed with respect to extra-continental flows of irregular migrants and refugees travelling from outside of the region into the Americas. Many of these flows are facilitated by weak and/or permissive visa policies and border management controls in countries such as Brazil and Ecuador. While the majority of these flows seek to transit through the Americas as a mean to reach the U.S., and to a lesser extent Canada, they also create added pressures on the region's migration and asylum systems.

At the **North American** level, there is a clear need for regional coordination and collaboration to effectively manage migration and refugee flows in the Americas, including in support of the integrity of the North American perimeter. The U.S. continues to receive significant flows of irregular migration from the region and has made addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement one of its key priorities. As such, substantive Canadian engagement in the region is a key lever in our relationship with the U.S. and many of our efforts will directly support key elements of the U.S.' priorities. This includes looking at our respective immigration and asylum policies, as well as development programming and reinforcing cooperation efforts as committed in the February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2021 Canada-U.S. *Roadmap for a Renewed U.S.-Canada Partnership*. In addition, the November 18<sup>th</sup> 2021 North American Leaders Summit (NALS) showcased migration challenges as key issues in the region and reconfirmed the states' commitment to work jointly to address irregular migration in the region. These efforts also recognize that the region is an important source of temporary labor for both Canada and the U.S., and providing more regular pathways may help to reduce levels of irregular migration.

At a sub-regional level, in **Central America** most countries are both countries of origin and countries of transit for migrants, and continue to face significant irregular migration and forced displacement challenges. These flows are due to a variety of factors including poor socio-economic conditions, political instability, insecurity, recurring natural disasters, and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic. The countries from Northern Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras), according to the United Nations, remain one of the most violent regions in the world, with the highest homicide rate outside of a war zone. Transit of irregular migrants through Costa Rica and Panama has also increased significantly over the last few years, with Costa Rica becoming a destination country for Latin American migrants, most notably from

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Nicaragua. For instance, from January to September 2021 alone, Panama reported 82,000 irregular migrants crossing into its territory, and Mexico reported processing more than 77,000 asylum claims (of which 19,000 were from Haitian nationals, ranked second among nationalities requesting asylum). These northbound mixed population flows are expected to continue, despite Mexico and the U.S.'s enforcement and prevention efforts. While Canada has not yet faced significant irregular migration from Central America, Canada's migration system could be impacted due to worsening socio-economic conditions in the region and other countries' migration policies, notably changes in U.S. policy, which may influence asylum claims in Canada.

Similar to Central America, the **Caribbean** is also a region struggling with violence and a lack of economic opportunities, climate change and natural disasters. Nationals of some Caribbean countries often move in search of better economic opportunities in North and South America. In recent years, mobility-related engagement with Caribbean states has largely centered on Canada's visa policy and biometrics requirements, as well as labor mobility. The adoption of Citizenship by Investment Programs in select Caribbean countries (e.g. Antigua & Barbuda, St Kitts & Nevis) has led Canada to impose new visa requirements on states and in turn increased bilateral irritants with implicated Caribbean countries.

Mixed movement dynamics in **South America** – most notably associated with **Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants (VRMs)** – are having a significant impact and garnering substantial attention. The number of VRMs continues to grow; as of November 2021 there are approximately 5.9 million Venezuelans who have left the country since 2015, with limited prospects of return in the near future. With approximately 80% of VRMs being hosted in the Latin American and Caribbean regions, the effective integration of these refugees and migrants in host countries is key to ensuring stability in the Americas. IRCC's contribution in the region has been linked to strengthening the capacity of host governments to settle, protect, and integrate VRMs, focusing on regional coordination mechanisms and forums to share best practices on border management and migration and protection policy<sup>2</sup>. Canada also joined the Group of Friends of the Quito Process, a group of like-minded countries that supports the efforts of the members of the Quito Process, which is a mechanism to promote coordinated and harmonized responses among countries being impacted by VRMs. IRCC's specific participation in this area includes supporting efforts to harmonize approaches across the Quito Process countries. In addition, the recent flow of Haitian migrants originating from South America (Brazil and Chile) and subsequent interventions by U.S. authorities at the Mexico-U.S. border prompted widespread negative reaction from the international community. Haiti is also a top source country of irregular migration to Canada.

### Strategic Priorities

This Strategy identifies four strategic priorities, designed to reflect Canada's migration and refugee protection approaches and expertise, as well as to respond to the unique challenges faced by the Americas region, particularly resulting from increased irregular migration and forced displacements from the Northern Central America countries and Venezuela, as well as the impacts of shifting U.S. policies in the region. Priority countries include: Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Guatemala, Colombia, Brazil, and Haiti. Canada's capacity building efforts will focus in particular on the countries of Central America, Mexico and Colombia. Annex C to this document provides a snapshot of potential opportunities for Canadian engagement under these strategic priorities.

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<sup>2</sup> The VRMs crisis is an example of how the area sits at the nexus of migration, development and governance. A response to the migration-related challenges presented by this crisis requires coordination with the other aspects.

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### Strategic Priorities

- 1. Promote well-managed migration systems in the region and enhance capacity of countries to address irregular migration flows before they reach North America:** Canada will continue engaging and supporting partner countries to exchange best practices on key areas such as labor migration policies, visa policy and processing, and travel document integrity. This includes supporting **capacity building** initiatives that address irregular migration, contribute to the management of regional mixed population flows (e.g. from Central America, Haiti, Cuba and Venezuela), and seeking joint action to mitigate the impact of irregular migration. Canada will leverage its partnership with the U.S. and collaborate on capacity building efforts in areas of mutual interest. Canada will also continue and leverage existing mobility dialogues with Mexico, Brazil and the CARICOM.
- 2. Promote strong protection systems aligned with international commitments and norms, and the Global Compact on Refugees:** Engagement efforts will support collaborative regional initiatives such as the Quito process and MIRPS (Spanish acronym for the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework), where Canada, in its Chair role of the MIRPS Support Platform in 2021-22, will assist countries in addressing the challenges of large-scale forced displacements. Community sponsorship of refugees programs will also be promoted and supported by the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative. Success in the region in promoting expansion of resettlement space through community sponsorship or alternative pathways can be built upon. In addition to capacity building, Canada has committed to ramp up refugee resettlement from the Americas; for 2022-2023, a new resettlement commitment was introduced, beginning with 200-300 individuals in 2022, 700-800 in 2023 and up to 1,000 in 2024.
- 3. Promote balanced public narratives on migration and share expertise on effective integration of migrants in support of a stable Hemisphere:** Canada will share its experience and knowledge in the areas of settlement and integration. These efforts will target countries hosting VRMs, and countries from Northern Central America facing migration and forced displacement issues. Integration efforts, as well as communications efforts around migration narratives and the risks of irregular migration will help address irregular flows, increase inclusion and help combat xenophobia.
- 4. Increase awareness about Canada's immigration programs to both meet our most critical needs and provide benefits to the region:** Canada will continue to increase promotion of existing programs for temporary migration to address labor market needs, with a particular emphasis on key economic sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, food processing, IT, and health services. Efforts will also include the promotion of students programs. Partners in the Americas are increasingly interested in exploring labor mobility programs and opportunities with Canada. Engagement will also focus on efforts to ensure the integrity of Canada's migration system such as appropriate screening and visa policies, encouraging other countries to strengthen their approaches as well.

## Approach

The Government of Canada will proactively advance the above Strategic Priorities and will prioritize requests for engagement from Americas' partners based on these areas.

**Action plan / tracker:** An action plan will be prepared to guide and track progress and initiatives related to the Strategic Priorities. It will outline activities and expected outputs associated with the four Priorities. The action plan will also inform those involved of the scope and frequency of our engagements with partners in the Americas.

**Bilateral engagement** (country priorities) – IRCC will proactively engage key partner countries in the region where there are clear opportunities to cooperate on one or more of the Strategic Priorities. This includes for example:

- a) addressing irregular migration in the region, including working with the U.S. given the importance of securing our shared perimeter;
- b) supporting Mexico's efforts to manage and ensure sustainability of the visa exemption;
- c) defending Canada's interests and positions with regard to visa policy, most notably with the Caribbean, but also with countries such as Colombia; and
- d) supporting Canada's response to addressing VRMs.

IRCC will continue engaging through existing bilateral dialogues with Mexico and Brazil, as well as continue discussions through ad-hoc mobility discussions at countries' request, such as those with Colombia.

Domestically, engagement with key diplomatic representatives in Canada will continue to advance IRCC's priorities.

**Regional engagement** (priority forums) – Canada's membership and continued participation in regional migration forums includes the following:

- a) the **RCM** and its four working groups (Protection; Irregular and mass migration; Labor migration; and Border management), Canada will promote the objectives detailed in the Strategy. Canada will also seek to learn from the best practices and experiences from partners in the areas of managing large mixed migration flows and regional integration practices, and will promote collaboration between the RCM and other regional forums;
- b) through **MIRPS**, IRCC will be identifying opportunities to assist Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and Mexico, in implementing their National Action Plans to address the challenges of large-scale forced displacements;
- c) Canada is also an active member of the **Organization of Americas States (OAS) Committee on Migration Issues (CAM)**; continued involvement will allow Canada to play a key role in this multilateral forum, which brings together all states in the Americas;
- d) in the Caribbean, IRCC will also continue supporting Canada's engagement through the **Canada-CARICOM dialogue**, a bilateral mechanism to discuss matters of mutual interest, including migration and mobility issues.

**Capacity Building Programming** – Migration and protection related capacity-building activities in the Americas will focus on the four priorities of the Strategy and will seek to complement joint efforts with the U.S., to address irregular migration and forced displacements in Central America and Mexico. This includes initiatives supported through IRCC's **International Migration Capacity Building Program (IMCBP)**. IRCC has secured additional capacity building funds in 2021/22, and is continuing to seek opportunities to further

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increase its funding envelope for the Americas moving forward. Capacity building efforts will target Mexico and Central American countries, including Costa Rica, Panama, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, as well as Colombia and other countries hosting VRMs. IRCC's areas of intervention are expected to include strengthening asylum and protection systems; improving migration management; promoting regular migration pathways; supporting regularization and labor mobility options as well as the socio-economic integration of refugees and migrants in the region, among other areas.

**Building, Maintaining and Strengthening Partnerships** – IRCC will continue to develop and nurture relationships with governments in the Americas, and to exchange best practices, discuss migration policies and engage on mobility issues. It will also continue to collaborate and engage with key non-governmental stakeholders, particularly multilateral and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) involved in the migration and protection space. The areas noted above are in line with the Global Compacts, and new opportunities to enhance regional migration cooperation and responsibility sharing in terms of refugees, will also be advanced in line with the respective Compact implementation processes. One such avenue will be through continued engagement with the governments of Argentina and Brazil and other interested States through a global States Network that Canada and the UK governments co-chair through the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative. In addition, IRCC will continue to strengthen its partnerships with the U.S. and Mexico, and explore joining efforts on key areas such as addressing irregular migration and fostering managed and regular migration systems that can provide benefits for migrants and destination countries, while seeking positive refugee protection engagement. Engagement of new partners, including from the private sector and philanthropic organizations, as well as refugees themselves, will feature in protection-related engagements.

### Roles and Responsibilities

Multiple branches undertake implementation of *IRCC's Strategy for the Americas*, both in headquarters and abroad. While IRCC's International and Intergovernmental Relations Branch (IIR) will lead on maintaining the strategy, monitor the progress of deliverables, support planned activities, and engage with Americas' partners in Canada and abroad, this is intended as a whole of Department strategy and other Branches are equally key to the Strategy's implementation.

Refugee Affairs Branch (RAB) will continue to lead and guide much of Canada's protection-related engagement and policy activities in relation to Strategic Priority #2. International Network (IN) also plays a critical role in supporting activities, engaging with partners in the region, gathering information and undertaking risk analysis and research. IN, through its Migration Program Managers (MPM) and Area Director, is already playing an active role on many of these issues and activities at Canada's missions abroad, and will be a key player in implementing the Strategy. Missions in the Americas will be asked to continue their role in outreach, advocacy of Canadian positions and reporting, recognizing the priorities laid out in the Strategy. Other branches within IRCC also regularly engage with partners in the Americas, including with government officials, international organizations (i.e. IOM and UNHCR), civil society organizations and NGOs. The engagement of these branches is crucial to the implementation of this Strategy. While the roles and responsibilities of each sector are not described in this Strategy, they will each be asked to contribute by identifying in the action plan how they can support the priorities identified through ongoing or future engagements.

While IRCC is responsible for leading the Government of Canada's international engagement on migration and protection diplomacy, close collaboration with other departments, including with Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), and the Immigration Refugee Board of Canada, will be

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vital to the implementation of the Strategy. IRCC will make tools available, including key messages and presentations, to support GAC and others in promoting the issues abroad, in the absence of an IRCC local presence in certain countries and/or at specific events in the region.

With regard to the implementation of capacity building initiatives, IRCC will ensure to coordinate with several GAC Programs, including:

- Anti-Crime Capacity Building Program (ACCBP): whose current and upcoming capacity building assistance aims at combatting human trafficking and migrant smuggling;
- Development Assistance programs: which will work to address the root causes of irregular migration in the Americas; and
- Venezuela Task Force: which will focus on addressing the needs of VRMs in the region.

Likewise, coordination will be ensured with the CBSA, which is engaged in both supporting irregular migration deterrence efforts and in building border management capacity internationally.

### Measuring Success - Migration engagement

In order to measure the success of the migration components of this Strategy, all those involved are asked to track a number of indicators. Branches and missions are asked to record the following indicators for their activities in the designated section of the Action Plan, and to provide an updated Action Plan on a quarterly basis:

- Event size: Records the scale of an activity, as Small (0-10), Medium (10-50), or Large (50+ and, where outreach and new partnerships is an objective, records whether participants were new to engagement in this sphere.
- Moderated/Presented: A qualitative description of whether Canada acted as a resource or leader for an activity or simply was present/participated.
- Citations: Records when Canada or a representative is cited in media, social media, reports or other publications as a result of our activities
- Outcome: Records policy and program changes that indicate influence of Canadian activities, or if not available, records qualitative description of the practical impact of the activity or if not available, records qualitative description of the practical impact of the activity.

### Risks and Limitations

Despite opportunities for Canadian engagement in the Americas, several risks and limitations must be acknowledged. Canada is a leader in managed migration, refugee protection, settlement and integration. That said, Canada is also at a different stage of development, with different economic and security contexts, has not been a country of origin or transit of migrants and has not faced the same level of mixed migration flows that many countries in the Americas are experiencing. As such, Canada's approach to migration has emerged out of a very specific set of historical, social, and geographic circumstances. Thus, despite the fact that Canada has a managed migration model that allows for a pace and a mix of immigration that contribute to economic and social well-being, **there are limitations concerning the level to which experiences and best practices from Canada can be applied in the Americas context, and vice versa.**

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Additionally, the economic, geographic, and developmental diversity of the region means that any application of the priorities in this Strategy will need to be tailored to the unique context of each sub-region and country. In addition, it is important to note that migration issues and challenges are also linked to deep rooted and systemic issues of inequality and insecurity and would be better addressed through international development and security and law enforcement efforts.

Furthermore, the level of resources available for collaboration and cooperation in the areas of refugee protection and migration policy is limited. The purpose of this Strategy is in part to help match Canadian engagement to available resources with the aim of achieving concrete results. This will also mean some areas of potential cooperation may need to be set aside.

It is equally important to note that there are many unknown factors that may impact this Strategy, such as further deterioration of the Venezuelan crisis, or sudden increases in irregular migration driven by deterioration of the socio-economic conditions, natural disasters and political upheaval in the region. In addition, shifts in countries' migration and border policies, particularly those of the U.S., and especially those which are sudden and/or unexpected, may also cause ripple effects across the region and influence Canada's engagement opportunities. This continually evolving context in the region will require adjustments to the Strategy and to Canadian activities over time.

### **Implications of COVID-19 Pandemic**

Beginning in March 2020 countries around the world, including Canada, entered into a prolonged period of lockdown, in an attempt to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Since that time the global pandemic has continued to impact travel and border management and the global economy. The pandemic additionally triggered more stringent immigration policies, xenophobia and racism but also new opportunities – a dramatic increase in engagement around community sponsorship of refugees, for example, has been witnessed in this time. It is likely that migration patterns around the world will shift as a result of the pandemic and its impacts. Opportunities for engagement on migration issues will also be affected as governments turn their focus to stimulus and shielding their own citizens from health and economic harm and as new migration related challenges occur. Canada will be no exception, seeing migration as a key element to support pandemic recovery.

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**Annex A – Highlights of IRCC's Current Engagement**

Many of IRCC's current, ongoing bilateral and multilateral engagements already support the four Strategic Priorities identified for IRCC's future engagement in the Americas. The table below provides some select examples of how the Department will continue to advance Canada's interests:

Current Activities	Timeframe	Aligns with IRCC Strategic Priority	Additional Considerations
Canada-Mexico High Level Dialogue on Mobility Dialogue with Mexico (HLDM)	Semi-annual	All Strategic Priorities	The Canada-Mexico HLDM is the primary forum to discuss migration issues and opportunities for collaboration between the two countries, including issues linked to the visa exemption and asylum flows, as well as joint collaboration in the region.
Canada-Brazil Mobility Working Group (CBMWG)	Annual	All Strategic Priorities	The Working Group serves as the main forum to strengthen dialogue and to explore further collaboration with Brazil, in particular on irregular migration issues.
Canada-U.S. Working Group on capacity building in the Americas	Semi-Annual	Strategic Priorities 1 and 2	Through this new Working Group, Canada will continue the dialogue with the U.S. on joint efforts to manage irregular migration and forced displacements in the Americas.
Canada CARICOM senior officials' dialogue	Annual	All Strategic Priorities	The Canada CARICOM senior officials' dialogue is a bilateral mechanism to discuss matters of mutual interest, including migration issues and IRCC will continue supporting Canada's engagement in this forum in matters such as the visa policy, biometrics and other mobility issues.
Participation at the Organization of Americas States (OAS)	Ongoing	Strategic Priorities 3 and 4	Canada is an active member of the OAS, including in the Committee on Migration Issues (CAM). Continued involvement in the CAM will allow Canada to play a key role in this multilateral fora which brings together all states in the Americas.
Chair of the MIRPS (Spanish acronym for Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework) Support Platform	2021-2022	Strategic Priorities 2 and 3	Canada is the Chair the MIRPS Support Platform until June 2022 and it represents an opportunity for further engagement and support for comprehensive refugee responses in the region. As Chair, Canada will work closely with Honduras, the MIRPS Pro Tempore Presidency in 2022, and other Support Platform states including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and the US, to assist MIRPS Member States in addressing the challenges related to forced displacement in the region.
Capacity building in the Americas	Ongoing	Strategic Priorities 1, 2 and 3	Through its current and upcoming capacity building efforts, IRCC will continue to support the development of well-managed migration systems that facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration in the region. More specifically, the department will provide assistance that seeks to address the needs of VRMs in targeted host countries in the region, with a specific focus on Panama and Colombia. Further capacity building efforts will work to strengthen asylum system capacity, promote regularization, and labor mobility and economic integration for migrants and refugees in Mexico and Central American countries, with a focus on Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. Capacity building initiatives will also seek to complement joint efforts with the U.S., to address irregular migration and forced displacement in Central America.

**Annex B – Action Plan**

A draft Action Plan is being developed to proactively guide engagement in support of the four Strategic Priorities and for monitoring implementation. The draft Action Plan outlines activities and expected outputs associated with the Priorities and it will be circulated on a quarterly or semi-annual basis along with the implementation of the Strategy for tracking and results reporting.

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**Annex C – Potential Opportunities for Canadian Migration and Protection Engagement in the Americas**

**Mexico:** Middle income country. Bilateral cooperation through the Canada-Mexico High Level Dialogue on Mobility and regional cooperation through the RCM

*Opportunities:* Migration management, asylum and protection systems, document (i.e. passport) integrity; Improve capacity to integrate returnees; Promote regular migration pathways focusing on labour migration programs and ethical recruitment. Engage via MIRPS.

**Northern Central America countries:**

*Opportunities:* Cooperation regionally through the RCM and MIRPS; regular pathways of migration aligned with key economic sectors; migration management, asylum and protection systems, document (i.e. passport) integrity; socio-economic integration of refugees and migrants.

**Colombia:**

*Opportunities:* Regularization and socio-economic integration of VRMs, migration management, document (i.e. passport) integrity, asylum and protection systems, anti-xenophobia efforts, and engagement on visa regime addressing irregular migration flows to Canada.

**Ecuador:**

*Opportunities:* Migration management, visa processing and policies, asylum and protection systems, document (i.e. passport) integrity.

**Haiti:**

*Opportunities:* Migration management; improve capacity to integrate returnees; security and integrity issues.

**Caribbean:**

*Opportunities:* Migration management, asylum and protection systems, document (i.e. passport) integrity, capacity building; support broader GoC engagement (e.g. Canada-CARICOM dialogue); labor migration.

**Costa Rica and Panama:** Middle income countries. Both are transit and destination countries and heavily impacted by recent increased population flows.

*Opportunities:* Cooperation regionally through the RCM and MIRPS; migration management, document integrity (i.e. passport), asylum and protection systems; regularization and socio-economic integration of VRMs, refugees, and migrants; deterrence of irregular migration routes, and dialogue and sharing of best practices related to pathways for permanent and temporary migration.

**Brazil:**

*Opportunities:* Continued engagement on bilateral cooperation through AIDM-level Canada-Brazil Mobility Working Group; Engagement on visa regime; extra-continental irregular migration and integration.

**Chile:** High income country with skilled labour, among fastest growing economies in the region; currently experiencing exodus from Haitians upwards. Recently adopted a new Migration Law.

**Argentina:** Middle income country with skilled labour; economic recovery expected to continue. GRSI and MIRPS SP

*Opportunities:* Dialogue and sharing of best practices related to pathways for temporary and permanent migration; promote inclusive narrative about Haitians as migrants and forced displaced population; asylum system strengthening and passport integrity, settlement and integration, including saturation and retention outside major urban centres, opportunities for engagement on community sponsorship of refugees in Chile (and Uruguay).

**Key Areas of Regional Intervention:**

- Promote Regular Migration Pathways
- Address Irregular Migration
- Enhance Protection and Integration Systems (including in response to mass mixed migration flows)
- Capacity building/sharing of Canadian expertise
- Diplomatic dialogue on opportunities and challenges
- Actively monitor the Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant crisis and its impact on the Hemisphere.