

**Joint Data Centre / World Bank / University of Los Andes 2nd Research Conference on
Forced Displacement**

Online, 20 January 2022

Remarks by Mari Elka Pangestu

*** Statement begins ***

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening!

On behalf of the three co-hosts - Universidad de los Andes in Bogota, the World Bank's Research Department and the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement - it is my honor to welcome you. You are attending the second research conference focused exclusively on socio-economic research on those forcibly displaced, and their hosts. My name is Björn Gillsäter, Head of the Joint Data Center.

We have just seen the faces of refugees, IDPs and stateless people. Our conference is about people and individuals. Keep these women, men, youth and children in mind as we proceed the next three days.

The Joint Data Center views itself - among other things - as a convener of researchers and policy-folks who share a deep, serious and sincere interest in improving the lives of those forcibly displaced, through robust quantitative research.

We also believe it is our job to create a platform where researchers can share - and test their latest work. With their peers, but importantly also with policy-makers and practitioners.

And we fund data collection in some 20 countries, and populate libraries for all you researchers and practitioners to draw from.

We are delighted to have close to 800 people registered for this conference, with a good mix of academics, government representatives, international organization professionals and civil society colleagues.

The sheer size of this figure is inspiring in itself! It shows both a commitment to data, facts and evidence, and an eagerness to learn and to find solutions.

During these three days, we will mainly focus on the 85 percent of the 84 million refugees, IDPs or stateless people who have taken refuge in a country in the “global south”.

The 85 percent is a statistic that is often lost on the general public, but I was really pleased to see many of our authors make this point up front in their papers.

Let’s also not forget that more than half of the world’s displaced – 48 million – are displaced within their own country. This group tends to get the least support and needs more attention.

Further, let’s also keep this in mind that we are looking at the increasing protractiveness of displacement, and hence we need to take a comprehensive approach, beyond “just” humanitarian needs.

Two years ago, we held the first conference ever devoted exclusively to the socio-economic dimensions of forced displacement. As we wrapped up that conference, two of the take-aways were:

First, a sense that the challenges faced by those internally displaced were under-researched in

relationship to the scale and magnitude of the challenge.

Second, that the academic diversity at that conference was too limited: there was a clear majority of economists. There was a sense - at that time – that we needed to cast a wider net, and learn also from other disciplines, including political science, data scientists and sociology. Those take-aways have guided the focus of this conference.

A word on the selection of the papers. We received some 154 submissions. In selecting, priority was given to those papers that tackled interesting and original research questions, while adopting robust, and innovative, analytical methods. And they all had to be relevant to the improvement of the lives of the 85 percent displaced in the “global south”. We believe that all of the presented papers satisfy these requirements.

Let me recognize the scientific committee in charge of selecting the 24 papers that we will be discussing. Toan Do at the World Bank, Andres Moya at the Universidad de los Andes, and Domenico Tabasso here at the JDC, ably assisted by Charlotte Persson with the JDC. Please put your cameras on! Thank you.

Now, to help us set the stage and put our work in a wider context, we have invited three distinguished and very well-placed speakers to offer opening remarks.

Let me first turn , I have the honor to welcome George Okoth-Obbo. George has a long and distinguished career with UN’s Refugee Agency, including as Assistant High Commissioner for Programs. Most recently, he served as the Head of the Secretariat of the United Nations Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. Starting February 1, George will take up the position as the UN Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Responsibility to Protect. We are so pleased to have you with us. Over to you.

Next, Mari Pangestu. Ms Pangestu is the Managing Director for Development Policy and Partnerships at the World Bank. Before joining the Bank in 2020, she served as Indonesia's Minister of Trade for seven years and as Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy for three. Ms Pangestu, we are honored to have you join us – the floor is yours.

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As the third opening speaker, I am pleased to invite Paula Gaviria Betancur. Paula is the executive director of Compaz Foundation. She is a lawyer and journalism specialist. Paula was a member of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. She is the former Presidential Advisor for Human Rights in Colombia and former director of The Victims Unit. Among her many achievements, she was active in the negotiations of the Final Peace Agreement signed between the Colombian Government and the FARC guerilla, for which the then Colombian President was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

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Two asks:

1. Please fill out the survey. You will find it in om your inbox, on our website, in the chat.

Please!

2. I want to crowd-source an Op-Ed based on feedback from the conference. The question answered in the piece is this: "what did research ever do to improve the situation of those forcible displaced and their hosts?" Find a live-poll here on Webex where you can suggest your top one-two policy-relevant

In case you want to post and tweet about the conference....

Our colleague **Nellie Pomi** will next tell us about some housekeeping, including meeting etiquette, general tips and interpretation.

*** Statement ends ***

