



## Session Sketch

Asan Plenum 2019: “Korea’s Choice”  
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**Session:** Immigrants or Refugees?  
**Date/Time:** April 24, 2019 / 10:45-12:15

**Rapporteur:**  
Karl Friedhoff, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

**Moderator:**  
Marie McAuliffe, International Organization for Migration

**Speakers:**  
Mely Caballero-Anthony, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University  
Gordon Flake, Perth USAsia Centre, University of Western Australia  
Lee Jasmine, Korea Cultural Diversity Organization  
Neil G. Ruiz, Pew Research Center  
Jay Song, University of Melbourne

**Session Sketch:**  
This is the first time that a panel focusing immigration has been included at the Asan Plenum, and all panelists agreed that this was an important new topic. It is becoming a strategic issue, especially as demographic imbalances emerge in Asia.

There are four key trends impacting immigration around the world. The first is process and products. The processes have changed based on the products of communication technologies, where migrants have access to real time info, dramatically reduced transportation costs, and increased access. The second is the breakdown in binary constructs between forced immigration and immigration by choice. The degree of choice is dynamic and can shift quickly, and even refugees can actively engage in migration. Third, there have been significant advances in the global governance of migration. International compacts have developed as have governance at the city level. The latter is increasingly important as immigrants are increasingly moving to urban areas—following broader population trends. Finally, demographic transition has placed pressure on countries that are aging, especially like Korea, that are facing rapid population decline in the near future.

A final point made across the panel was that the term illegal immigration was no longer sufficient and that irregular immigration was more important to understand the breadth of types of immigration taking place. This difference is key as it retains the understanding of why people are moving. The reasons are diverse, but coping with that diversity will be key in protecting people as they enter outbound and inbound movements around the globe.

*\* The views expressed herein are summaries and may not necessarily reflect the views of the speakers or their affiliated institutions.*