

2013 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development

Theme: “Identifying concrete measures to strengthen coherence and cooperation at all levels, with a view to enhancing the benefits of international migration for migrants and countries alike and its important links to development, while reducing negative implications”

Intervention by
The Honourable Frederick A. Mitchell, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs
and Immigration of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas

Thursday, 3 October 2013

Check Against Delivery

Mr. President,

On Saturday last the Prime Minister of The Bahamas spoke in the General Debate and put migration on the agenda. It is an issue which is front and centre for The Bahamas. It has the potential if not carefully managed to destabilize all that we are seeking to create: the best little country in the world. We sit in the middle of a number of countries that are sources of illegal migration to us, notwithstanding the best efforts of all of the governments concerned: Haiti to the south of us; Cuba to the west of us. The country to which the migrants go is the United States.

The Bahamas therefore finds itself often in a vortex which is not of its own making but the consequences of which we often have to live with and to withstand; often the object of forces and policies which affect us but which we are powerless to control.

This high level dialogue is welcomed as yet another opportunity to ensure that our friends around the world are aware of the serious consequences which we face with illegal migration. This dialogue is therefore important to us first and foremost as a means of stopping undocumented, illegal migration to The Bahamas.

We have good relations with all governments around us. However governments sometimes are undermined by forces beyond their control: criminal elements, ideological policies that undermine common sense and the dictates of bad economies.

What we know however is that if we have the will to stop it, we can. We can do so by ensuring that there is cooperation against trafficking and smuggling; that we discard ideology and adopt common sense and we work together to solve the economic problems of our countries and region.

The Bahamas wishes to adopt the following statement which was delivered on behalf of the Caricom region here at the U N:

The following issues must inform any efforts to elaborate the post-2015 agenda, including the development of SDGs, targets and indicators:

- o Addressing the root causes of migration, so migration is by choice not necessity
- o Combating trafficking and/or smuggling of migrants
- o Protecting migrants against human rights abuses, racism,

ethnocentrism and xenophobia

- o Improving data, especially disaggregated data on international migration (including forced migration)
- o Facilitating the flow and use of remittances to support development, and
- o Strengthening of dialogue and cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination

It has been distilled from the conclusions of these preparations that no sustainable solutions will be achieved unless the foregoing imperatives are adopted. We are committed to working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the region and the world at large to help resolve these migration issues. Our future, our survival and our identity depend upon it.

Mr. President,

The Bahamas would wish to propose a final outcome from this High-Level Dialogue, namely the establishment of a permanent Forum on Migration and Development.

And, in conclusion, **Mr. President,**

This Dialogue should guarantee that The Bahamas will not become a casualty of migration but rather a beneficiary of documented, sustainable development.

I thank you.