

**STATEMENT BY RT. HON. PERRY G. CHRISTIE
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THE BAHAMAS, ON BEHALF OF THE CARIBBEAN
COMMUNITY**

AT EU - CELAC SUMMIT

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It is an honour to be here to engage in this important interface. I mean to say again that this is an important interface both for our country and the Caricom sub-region. I hope that we all agree that these meetings should not just be another opportunity to recite platitudes of goodwill and the usual bromides about how we must all work together.

The truth is we must work together. The call to do so and the need to do so is more urgent than ever.

I wish therefore, to take this rare opportunity to discuss four issues which I have sought to stress throughout my Chairmanship of Caricom. These are important for our hemisphere. They are certainly of the utmost importance to the sub-region. They should be adopted by our partners in the European Union as urgent action points.

I have had the advantage of reviewing the draft of the declaration and I am pleased to address the following points:

Climate change; Citizen Security; Migration and Financial Services.

I wish to say again, that for The Bahamas and for the sub region, Climate Change is existential. Yes, Climate Change is an ever present threat to our existence. In The Bahamas, some eighty per cent of the land is below 5 feet of sea level. That means if the sea level rises, then much of The Bahamas is gone. We have already seen the rains come to St. Vincent, Dominica and St. Lucia in 2013 and it wiped out significant proportions of the GDP of those countries within 8 hours. We expect more of this extreme weather, not less of this.

This means that those who are the major emitters have to take dramatic steps to curb these emissions; dramatic steps must be taken to ensure that the global atmospheric temperature increase remains below 1.5 degrees Celsius. For the Caribbean region, it is do or die.

We are therefore pleased that the G7 meeting appears to have committed to eliminating fossil fuel use by the end of the century.

When we met our colleague, the French President in Martinique several weeks ago, we stressed the urgency of our call to action. In particular, we emphasized that the funding to allow countries to adapt to climate change and mitigate the effects, should be made available to our Small Island Developing States and Low Lying Coastal States, without regard to GDP per capita as the major determinant for concessional funding. The availability of this funding must be based on the vulnerabilities which these countries experience.

Secondly, I wish to stress the issue of citizen security and the adjunct to that public policy issue: the education and training of our young. I have said this many times before. There is a sense of hopelessness; there is a problem with joblessness among the young, both here and in our regions, which we must address. If we ignore it, we do so at our peril.

We see the pathologies of this throughout our sub-region. Crime is a major issue and the violence that goes with it. The young are disproportionately affected by unemployment.

We, in the region and in my country, are focused on what we can do to reverse the trend of citizen insecurity. We sit astride

some of the great international air and sea lanes for commerce. That accident of geography, is both a blessing and a curse. We sit between the drug producers on one side and the drug consumers on the other side. In between we bear the brunt of this problem. Our children are threatened by this nefarious trade, now extended to include human smuggling, human trafficking, and the illegal trade in small arms. We are pressed on every side.

That is why we are so strong on our support of the Arms Trade Treaty, so strong that one of our Member States, Trinidad and Tobago, has submitted its candidacy to be the Headquarters of the Secretariat. It is a significant step toward trying to end the illegal arms trade; these arms that have our societies too often bathed in blood and which threaten to overwhelm the legitimate law enforcement agencies.

Our budgets have to be increasingly dedicated to these security concerns. It is a real guns or butter decision.

We know that if we do not address it, there will be no economy. This meeting provides yet another opportunity to make this known to the world.

I turn now to the issue of migration. Having read the draft text, it is clear that migration is an important issue for member states. There are several paragraphs which are dedicated to migration, migrants and in particular, the right to regular

migration and the rights of all migrants, no matter their legal status.

I did not instruct our delegates to derogate from the text because we believe that everyone's human rights should be protected, no matter the status of the individual. However, it is important for me to use this opportunity to say that The Bahamas is concerned that there is balance on this issue.

We face a flood of illegal migrants from the south of us. The evidence is that this is a carefully orchestrated criminal enterprise to export people and the price is not cheap. The result is that our country has to spend scarce resources trying to beat back an ever rising tide of illegal migrants. We have toughened the laws. We have spent monies increasing the size of our maritime forces. We have appealed to border states to stop the incursions. Yet the illegal migration continues.

While we agree, to some extent, that the underlying cause is poverty, the fact is we cannot sustain the onslaught but we will do our best to fight it. The public policy of all countries joined in this current enterprise at EU-CELAC would then do well to take note and in particular, since the European Union is facing a similar crisis, to inform our public policy to break up the criminal enterprises driving these migrant incursions.

Finally, I wish to say that we continue to be disturbed by the disconnect between our European partners and ourselves over the state of the financial services sector. There is a continued role for places that manage wealth. Privacy is still a virtue and the right to private property and to manage one's money is an ancient right. In the pursuit of tax policies, this right to privacy

seems to have been eroded. Countries, in their zeal, have imposed unfunded mandates which have caused untold hardship in our countries that were and are engaged in an honest enterprise with fair tax competition. This has now become in some quarters a moral negative. We do not agree that it is. We deplore the attempt to destroy this sector. We again ask our partners to take note.

I thank you for your attention to these matters.

It is wonderful to be in this city.