



STATEMENT TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE HIGH  
LEVEL DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
15 SEPTEMBER 2006  
NEW YORK

Madame President,

Distinguished delegates,

I bring greetings from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretary General, The Hon Edwin Carrington; who regrettably could not be here with us, and also take this opportunity to congratulate you on your accession to the honorable post of President for the Sixty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Madame President, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) comprises of fifteen Member States and five Associate Members and we support the statements made by those States. Recognizing the impacts of migration on the development of the Community the matter was discussed at the highest decision making body of CARICOM. Madame President, the Caribbean Community welcomes the opportunity for the High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development and hopes that the dialogue contributes to an exchange of best practices on migration and development and fosters cooperation on key migration issues at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

Migration is an expression of an individual's will for an improvement in his/her economic situation and a better quality of life, but it also involves relations between sovereign states. In this regard, there is a need for strengthening the governance of migration at the national, regional and international levels and CARICOM welcomes the Secretary General's suggestion for a global consultative forum on international migration to development as a mechanism to forge greater cooperation and coherence on the issue.

Migration is a complex multidimensional phenomenon and its impacts on development for the Region are both positive and negative. It is clear the pace of sustainable development is influenced by the migration flows that further compromises the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Migration, therefore, cannot be separated from issues of market access, trade imbalances, debt sustainability, unemployment/underemployment, poverty and inequalities.

Our Region is impacted to varying degrees by the phenomenon of migrations as countries of origin and destination through the loss or gain of skilled labor; movement of temporary workers; flows of remittances; human trafficking and returning migrants, voluntary and through forced repatriation of migrants and foreign-born legal residents to the Region. It is worth noting, Madame President, that a study is presently being conducted in Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago that is investigating the social implications resulting from the return of nationals who had migrated at a young age and were returning as adults, as well as the consideration of assets accumulated by forced returnees.

Madame President, demographic trends and economic developments determine the in and out flows of migrants intra-regionally and extra-regionally. Within the Region, the flows are also associated with various economic activities. It is envisaged that within the foreseeable future the centrifugal forces of deteriorating economic and social conditions, high unemployment or underemployment, particularly for younger persons, would continue to favor intra-regional migration, more so, in light of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) as provided for under the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. Safeguarding the rights of migrants and their families are recognized as an important aspect of this development and the CARICOM Agreement on Social Security must be considered a supportive measure for the free movement of skills. Additionally, the issue of contingent rights is under consideration.

Economically motivated migration can ease pressure on labour markets and reduce unemployment, poverty and social inequality in countries if it is surplus labour that is exported, however, for the Caribbean, the reality is slightly different. It is the highly skilled and educated in search of higher wages and better employment opportunities that are on the move worldwide. The cost of the transfer of resources to the Region is significant and requires the application of co-development schemes. To counter the effects of the deficit the Region has undertaken efforts to establish mechanisms for migration management such as the managed migration programme for nurses adopted by CARICOM, the free movement of skilled labour within the CSME and the importation of skilled labour in some Member States particularly in the health sector.

As a result of the continuous migration from the region, a Caribbean diaspora has evolved primarily located in North America and in former colonizer countries of the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands and includes foreign-born and persons with one or both parents of Caribbean origin. The Caribbean diaspora plays a significant role in the region and the Caribbean Community, Madame President, recognises the importance of the Caribbean diaspora to its development, their role in the strategic positioning of the Region and in the implementation of the CSME to maximise the benefits which this could bring to the Caribbean people. In this regard, at the Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Heads of Government (3-6 July 2006 in St Kitts and Nevis), the proposal for the convening of the Conference on the Caribbean in June 2007 was strongly endorsed which would *intra alia* seek to deepen the Region's relations with the Caribbean Diaspora in the United States of America. .

The Caribbean diaspora also plays a vital role through remittances which are transferred to low and middle income families in the source countries that contributes to improvement in their welfare. While individually these remittances are made in small amounts, collectively, they represent a significant inflow of foreign exchange. The Caribbean countries rank among the top 30 countries in the world with the highest remittance flows as a percent of GDP. Remittance flows now exceed both Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows as well as Official Development Assistance (ODA) for the Region as a whole. However, the *total losses* due to skilled emigration outweigh the recorded remittances for the Caribbean Region on average, and for almost *all* the individual Caribbean countries (IMF WP/06125 January 2006).

Migrants often retain links with their country of origin through periodic visits, remittances or via the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). New trends in migration patterns suggest that losses may be temporary, since migrants who spend their productive years within the Diaspora are retiring to their countries of birth and demonstrate a sense of civic commitment

towards improving social conditions within their home countries. Further, younger professionals who have obtained job opportunities in the Region are returning and this adds a positive element to the migration balance sheet.

Madame President, CARICOM recognises the magnitude of migration to development and the subject occupied the attention of the Heads of Government of the Twenty-seventh Conference Heads of Government in July this year (3-6 July 2006, St Kitts and Nevis). The Conclusions of the Conference are particularly noteworthy for this august gathering. The Conference:

**Agreed** that special attention be paid to establishing policies in specific areas such as:

- the development of migration policy;
- the verification of strategies for the retention of skilled labour;
- establishment of a reliable information system/database;
- use of information to enhance National Capacity;
- building social support systems to respond to the requirements of voluntary and involuntary return migrants;
- relations with the diaspora

**Also agreed** on the need to adopt a multilateral approach to the issue of human trafficking and to support a Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) to create an impartial and transparent mechanism for evaluating the progress of countries with respect to human trafficking;

**Supported** the recommendation of the Community Council (the second highest decision-making body of the Community) for the establishment of a Technical Working Group to undertake a policy study and report to Heads of Government through the relevant Councils and the Community Council within one year. The terms of reference are presently under consideration.

Madame President, in conclusion, CARICOM Is committed to working towards optimizing the benefits of migration for development. I thank you for this opportunity to address this august gathering.

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