



**Statement by H.E. Rhoda M. Jackson
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas to
the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva**

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(ExCom)**

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Thank you, Mr. Chair.

At the outset, The Bahamas takes this opportunity to, once again, congratulate the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, on his appointment, and to warmly welcome him at, this, his first Session of the Executive Committee in that capacity. The Bahamas assures the High Commissioner of its full support and cooperation as he stewards this Organization in the fulfilment of its important mandate.

Mr. Chair,

Allow me to also express the solidarity of The Bahamas with our sister countries of the Caribbean as we undergo the passage of hurricane Matthew through our region. This powerful storm has already claimed lives and has left, in its wake, significant damage, most recently, in Haiti, parts of Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

Indeed we are living in complex and challenging times, and moments such as these serve as a sobering reminder of the extent of the vulnerability faced, by small states such as ours, to natural disasters and climate-related weather events. These threaten our development gains at the national and regional levels; challenge our efforts to protect and promote the rights of the most vulnerable, and, imperil our very survivability.

The New York Declaration, recently adopted at the High Level Meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, clearly recognizes the multidimensional nature of human mobility and the role of environmental factors in this regard. Further, as previously highlighted by the former Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, such factors may also, directly or indirectly, result in human displacement.

Mr. Chair,

A country of only some 400,000 people, The Bahamas is a geographic gateway between the Caribbean and Florida. We are therefore situated in a complex migratory context, as a major transit point for irregular Caribbean migrants. Despite the burden this poses, The Bahamas continues to work constructively with the Governments of sending States in order to find sustainable ways of managing these challenges. In this regard, we are striving to strike the right balance between national security and protecting our porous borders, while upholding our international obligations and protecting human rights.

For The Bahamas, the issue of illegal immigration requires a balancing act between supply of migration flows and demands for labour. We must ensure that migration is managed within safe, legal, humane and orderly structures. This is the only means of saving the lives being risked and lost on perilous journeys at sea as well as to maximize the human development potential offered by labour mobility.

Mr. Chair,

At the High Level Meeting on refugees and migrants, the Rt. Honourable Perry G. Christie, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, stated that “while discourse on migration tends to focus on the negative aspects of irregular migration, we in The Bahamas, because of our own historical experience with the large movement of migrants, are acutely mindful of the positive contributions that can sometimes flow out of regular migration, and the considerable benefits to both sending and receiving countries. Such benefits include: economic development, cultural cross-fertilization, and the promotion of state-to-state cooperation in managing matters of common concern.”

The Prime Minister further stated that, no longer can we act as if it is “business as usual.” A more concerted effort must be made by all of us to manage irregular migration. We know that dialogue among countries of origin, transit and destination is critical, as no one country can face the challenge alone. The adoption of the New York Declaration represents a significant development toward this end.

Additionally, The Bahamas welcomed the historic signing of a relationship agreement between the International Organisation for Migration and the United Nations, in the margins of the High Level Meeting. We see this as both an important step forward in addressing the complex and interrelated challenges which are posed by migration, as well as an important symbol of the key role of partnership in global efforts to manage migration.

Mr. Chair,

In closing, The Bahamas continues to call for increased support from international, regional and multinational stakeholders for countries of origin, transit and destination. We further renew our commitment to the development of sustainable solutions for the effective management of human mobility, including through full implementation of the New York Declaration and the migration-related targets of agenda 2030.

I thank you.