



*Permanent Mission
of Barbados to
the United Nations*



STATEMENT BY

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TO THE

**HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL
MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

SEPTEMBER 14, 2006

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK**

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Madame President,

1. It is with great pleasure that I address this High-Level Dialogue on Migration, which represents an important step in enhanced international co-operation on the issue of international migration and development. It is my sincere hope that this Dialogue will be viewed as the beginning of sustained consideration of international migration issues at the United Nations. At the outset, I wish to associate myself with the statement made yesterday by the Minister of Home Affairs of South Africa, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Madame President,

2. The history of the Caribbean has been intrinsically linked to the movement of people- whether forced as in the case of Africans brought as slaves to our shores or voluntarily as in the case of colonists and indentured immigrants. In the English-speaking Caribbean, the 20th century brought infra-regional migration and the movement of our people to North America and Europe. Our region, like many others, has gained from international migration but at the same time has faced many challenges because of it.
3. The new era of international migration has created challenges and opportunities for societies throughout the world and has served to underscore the clear linkage between migration and development as well as the opportunities it provides for co-development. It is important that countries co-operate to create a mutually beneficial situation for migrants, their countries of origin and the societies to which they move. Barbados therefore supports the Secretary-General's suggestion on "developing a global consultative process within the United Nations that would allow Governments to forge constructive approaches to make the potential contribution of international migration to development a reality".
4. One of the most important benefits gained from Caribbean people living abroad has been the transfer of remittances to low and middle income families in the source or sending state. Caribbean countries rank among the top 30 countries in the world with the highest remittance flows as a percentage of GDP. Remittances from Caribbean nationals grew from about US \$ 400 million per year in the early 1990s to about US \$4 billion in 2002. Remittance flows now exceed both foreign direct investment inflows as well as official development assistance for the region as a whole. I must emphasise that these flows of capital are, above all, private funds destined for families and should not be viewed as a replacement for official development aid and development financing, as has been suggested in some quarters. Neither should financial remittances be considered as a substitute for the funding of national development efforts.
5. While the Barbadian diaspora continues to contribute significantly to the development of Barbados, we still face challenges from the movement out of the region of some of our most educated and highly skilled people. Indeed, this is a problem which affects the entire Caribbean and many other developing countries. The Caribbean region has the highest migration rate into the OECD countries in the world, in proportion to its labour force. Our region is a major exporter of highly qualified labour, in particular teachers, nurses and other health care professionals. We lose approximately 400 nurses each year to out-migration to

Canada, the UK and the US. At an estimated cost of US \$ 15-20 million per annum to train these nurses, this represents a significant movement of resources from the region. According to a recent IMF study, almost all of the Caribbean countries fall within range of the top 20 countries in the world with the highest emigration rates of tertiary-level graduates. The majority of Caribbean countries have over time lost more than 50% of the labour force in the tertiary segment and more than 30% in the secondary education segment.

Madame President,

6. The magnitude of these figures is a major cause for concern, as the exodus of valuable skilled professionals trained in the region *has* serious implications for development gains. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, "small national economies are most vulnerable to "brain drain", particularly in such crucial sectors as health and education." It is imperative therefore that measures be taken to address this "brain drain". Source countries require assistance both to train enough skilled workers and to retain them. Destination countries should invest in both training and the strengthening of those sectors from which they recruit personnel in source countries. Destination countries also need to make a better assessment of their needs in the immediate and long term and to devise plans to meet them, thereby reducing the demand for foreign skilled workers over a period of time.

Madame President,

7. There is an important positive symbiotic element to the movement of service providers across borders. There are mutual benefits to be gained by both destination and source countries. On the part of the destination countries, an important contribution is made by migrants to the building of their economies and societies. On the part of the source countries, the eventuality exists of "remittances of expertise" whereby migrants return home with enhanced capacity and abilities which redound positively to national development efforts.
8. In the Caribbean region we have recognised the potential development gains to be incurred from migration. In this respect, the free movement of persons is an important element of our regional integration efforts, specifically the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.
9. A void currently exists at the global level in addressing the various elements of international migration and development. This High-Level Dialogue is a good first step and Barbados attaches high importance to the need to address such issues within a multilateral context. Our attention to this matter must not now waiver. Migration will have an important impact on the ability of our countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and this High-Level Dialogue can make a difference if we adopt a holistic approach to the issue. We must demonstrate the political will required to pursue the outcome of our deliberations in an effective and results-oriented manner.

We are not at liberty to abstain from this task. I

thank you.