

I wish to join other delegations in thanking the co-facilitators for their guidance of and commitment to this process.

The Bahamas is pleased to offer its initial general comments on the GCM zero draft, and wishes to lend its support to the principles underlying both the zero draft, and the process as whole.

In our opening intervention in this process, we would wish to take this opportunity to present a narrative, which we hope will briefly introduce coherently The Bahamas perspective on migration and will frame how we approach these negotiations.

Co-facilitators,

Migration has become an accepted aspect of Bahamian life. The Bahamas has a history of the continual ebb and flows of people moving into, out of and around the archipelago. Even as we speak, the opportunistic incentives driving migration remain as high as ever, despite certain changes in migration trends over the years.

The Bahamas, because of its own historical experience with the movement of migrants, is acutely mindful of the potential yields of regular migration. It is likewise aware of the aggressive, criminal enterprises that benefit from irregular migration and the challenges of managing increasing influxes of mixed migration.

The Bahamas, therefore, considers imperative the design of a comprehensive approach to migration, that has a focus on the root causes of migration, includes the establishment of appropriate mechanisms that can help to ensure that migration occurs through safe and regulated channels, and provides for the development of specific programmes that produce environments where the benefits of migration can be derived.

The overarching objective of the migration policy of the Government of The Bahamas is to ensure the security, well-being, economic progress and overall development of The Bahamas, while respecting the human rights of migrants.

The Bahamas has a unique migration situation, based on its geographical location in the Atlantic Ocean, its economic and social prosperity and political stability, relative to its closest neighbours, and the porous nature of its archipelagic topography. Consequently, even before independence more than 40 years ago, irregular migration has been a perennial challenge that has defied years of mostly deterrence and remedial actions. The isolated nature of many islands has allowed large numbers of undocumented and/or unaccounted arrivals, resulting in a large population that is in general not integrated into, and perceived as not contributing positively to, The Bahamian society. This presents complex challenges to the formulation of effective and publicly accepted migration policies, among others.

Within this context, recent and past effects of climate change, natural disasters and environmental degradation presents acute and potential chronic challenges to regular migration cycles in our country, exacerbating internal and external negative drivers for migration.

The Bahamas is also a source country for migration and in this regard, the Government of The Bahamas is actively seeking to strengthen engagement with the Bahamian diaspora to boost national growth and sustainable development through the creation of the relevant structures and the provision of opportunities for inclusion in policy development processes, for example.

The Bahamas is concerned that the continued loss of a disproportionate number of highly qualified and skilled persons through migration has created deficits in the reservoir of human resources with potential negative implications for national development.

Meanwhile, we are committed to making every effort to ensure that the rights of all Bahamians living and working overseas are protected.

The Bahamas, recognizing that migration yields benefits to source, destination and transit countries, is supportive of the objectives contained in the zero draft document; particularly as they relate to root causes and drivers, disaggregated data as a means to inform policy, enhanced border management/security, criminal activity associated with migration and migration for sustainable development.

The Bahamas also believes the document should remove ambiguity regarding certain terminology contained in the text. Thus there should be a clear distinction between regular and irregular migration with a view to minimizing irregular migration. For Small Island countries which experience irregular migration, special consideration should be given to enhanced cooperation to facilitate dignified and sustainable return, readmission and reintegration into source countries.

As several other speakers have already mentioned, in our discussions we must be mindful that countries have the sovereign right and responsibility to manage and control migration within their territory. And this must be clearly reflected in the final document.

Within this context, The Bahamas is very interested in those provisions of the global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration that make reference to the following objectives;

- *Enhanced, innovative and comprehensive bilateral, regional and international cooperation and support to assist countries of origin, transit and destination, especially Small Island Developing States, and, Least Developed States, in the effective implementation of migration policies that promote safe, orderly and regular migration, and, that reduce the root causes, drivers and incentives for irregular migration.*
- *A coordinated approach and cooperation framework to improve data as a means to inform for migration policies*
- *A systematic and coordinated approach to the generation and analyses of databases on the circulation of people not recorded in any systematic way through traditional migration statistics*
- *Diaspora mapping*
- *Enhanced diaspora engagement in origin communities through, for example, the establishment of frameworks to encourage entrepreneurship, financial investment in major projects, participation in the development of national policies and strategies, and assistance to social welfare projects*
- *Coordinated efforts to remove obstacles of remittance transfer and consider alternative money transfer channels*
- *Improved mechanisms for migrant documentation*
- *The establishment of diaspora associations and partnerships to create critical linkages, consolidate networks and improve collaboration among different actors*
- *Assessment and address of the impact of the disproportionate loss of educated and skilled persons through among others, international and commercial recruitment, on affected countries*
- *Facilitate programmes that promote the return of qualified persons to countries of origin*
- *Enhance knowledge of international and commercial recruitment and its correlation to migration*
- *Support capacities to govern international labour recruitment*
- *Encourage research on climate change that establishes it as a driver of migration, and, integrate environmental considerations into relevant migration policy, as relevant.*

We look forward to working with you the co-facilitators and all Member States in creating a compact that will truly "make migration work for all".

I thank you.

