

High-level remarks

by

**the Honourable Philip E. Davis, KC, MP,
Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas**

at the

**High-Level Segment of the 114th Session of the Council of the International
Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Geneva**

Theme: *Climate impact on human mobility: a global call for solutions*

28 November 2023

Excellencies,

Distinguished High-Level Representatives,

Madam Director General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Bahamas avails itself of this opportunity to extend congratulations to Director-General Amy Pope, on your assumption of duty at the Head of the IOM. We reaffirm our strong support for your mandate as you steward the Organisation, at a time when visionary leadership is needed more than ever.

At this crucial juncture in our history, it is timely that this High-Level Segment seeks to address an issue that transcends borders, politics, cultures and requires an unwavering resolve - the profound impact of climate change on human mobility. While I regret my physical absence from the session, please know that as I speak, my current engagement at COP28 is a continuation of our collective battle against the adverse effects of climate change.

Everywhere on our planet, from the Caribbean's vibrant islands to the Amazon's dense jungles, from the bustling cities of Asia to the serene landscapes of Africa, climate change is not just altering our environment; it is reshaping the very fabric of human existence. It is a force that displaces communities, erodes our livelihoods, and challenges our conceptions of home and security.

Consider the rising sea levels, a silent yet relentless threat that is slowly swallowing coastlines and islands. These rising waters do not just erode shores; they wash away homes, dreams, and histories. Families that have lived for generations by the sea are now faced with the heart-wrenching decision to leave the lands of their lineage, to seek uncertain futures elsewhere. The sea, once a source of life and livelihood, has become an omen of displacement.

The highest point in The Bahamas, Mount Alvernia on Cat Island, standing at just 206 feet (63 meters) above sea level, vividly illustrates the unique vulnerability of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to the impacts of climate change. With such modest elevations across the islands, The Bahamas, an archipelagic Small Island Developing State is particularly susceptible to rising sea levels and intense storm surges, phenomena that are becoming increasingly common and severe due to climate change. This topographical reality underscores the existential threat posed to low-lying island nations, where even small changes in sea level can have significant and potentially devastating effects on the environment, infrastructure, and the livelihood of the people.

However, the scope of climate change is not limited to rising waters. We also see its wrath in the form of devastating hurricanes, floods, and damaged coral reefs, events growing more frequent and ferocious with each passing year.

We therefore welcome IOM's ongoing efforts to ensure that the organisation is adapted institutionally to current and future global needs including environmental factors as an important dimension and driver of increased irregular migration.

The increasing frequency and intensity of hurricanes have turned our lives into a cycle of recovery and despair. Hurricane Dorian, a name that evokes heartache in every Bahamian's heart, is a stark example of how climate change can devastate a nation. Our people, resilient though they are, face the daunting prospect of displacement, of leaving behind homes, culture, and history, as the sea claims more of our land.

Yet, The Bahamas is not a passive victim in this narrative. We are taking bold steps, as evidenced by our Sustainable Investment Programme, aligning our efforts with the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This programme is more than a policy; it is a commitment to finding a sustainable solution.

However, the challenges we face are not ours alone. They are shared by every coastal and island community worldwide. Climate change does not respect borders; its impacts are global, demanding a unified response.

We call on the developed world to support debt relief initiatives for developing countries to bolster disaster resilience and readiness. Financial support, technology transfer, and capacity building are not just requests; they are necessities, for our collective survival.

As we address this multidimensional challenge, we must also underscore the role of youth. They are not just our future; they are our present. Their ideas, energy, and passion are crucial in shaping a world resilient to the effects of climate change and a world that they can feel secure about where they call home. We must empower them, listen to them, and stand with them.

This is a defining moment for us as a global community. The actions we take today will echo through generations. We have a moral obligation, a duty to our fellow human beings, and to our planet, to rise to this challenge. Let us be remembered not as the generation that stood by as the world burned and flooded, but as the generation that stood up, that fought back against the rising tide of climate change and that extended a hand of solidarity to those uprooted by its impact.

I thank you.