

Lew Mendez

Address at the 100th Session of the Council of IOM

5th December 2011

Palace des Nations

ANTIGUA - Statement

Director General Ambassador Lacy, members and delegates of the Council, it is an honour for me to stand before this meeting of the 100th Session of the Council of this august body. It is also important for a number of reasons especially as it gives me, as the representative of my beloved country, the opportunity to be present on the occasion when the Small Developing Island State of Antigua and Barbuda becomes one of the newest members of the International Organisation for Migration.

It is also significant for us to have our request for membership approved during the celebration of the 60th Anniversary of this organisation. Antigua and Barbuda is situated in the Caribbean and became a fully-fledged sovereign state on the 1st November 1981. It is a country of 365 white sandy beaches and idyllic climate. Its population of 110 thousand citizens of many racial and religious origins living peacefully together makes it the ideal place to experience the warmth of the Caribbean. This year we too celebrated a significant milestone with 30 years of Independence and by that you will immediately acknowledge that we are a young progressive country.

The composition of the population has clearly demonstrated the openness of our society and it is to be noted that the country has become home, temporarily or permanently, to migrants from many countries. In fact apart from many the customary influx of citizens of our neighbouring Caribbean countries, Antigua and Barbuda has received immigrants from much further afield.

Membership allows Antigua and Barbuda, with the assistance of the various offices within the IOM, to build up its capacity to handle movement of migrants into and out of the country, to draw upon the research conducted by the IOM in tackling several of the developmental issues we face. This is needed in the prevailing financial crisis and downturn in national economies around the world.

High on the list, and in keeping with the strategic focus of the organisation, Antigua and Barbuda looks forward to further enhancing its developmental policy particularly in advance of the free movement of Caribbean Nationals with the sub-group of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Caribbean Community (Caricom).

On behalf of the Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda, I thank you for your kind consideration in admitting us into membership of the IOM and assure you of our highest regard.