



Statement by

**Her Excellency Rhoda M. Jackson
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and Other International Organisations in Geneva**

at the

107th Session of the Council of the International Organisation for Migration

**6 December, 2016
Geneva, Switzerland**

Mr. Chairman,

The Bahamas is pleased to participate in this historic session of the IOM Council. We extend congratulations to you, Ambassador Quinn, Permanent Representative of Australia in Geneva, on your election to the chairmanship of the Council, as well as to the other members of the Bureau, on also being elected. You have our full cooperation as you undertake your duties.

At the outset, my delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the delegation of Colombia, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

The Bahamas also takes this opportunity to warmly welcome the Kingdom of Tonga to the membership of the IOM, as well as all new observers.

Mr. Chairman,

The Bahamas expresses appreciation to the Director-General for his comprehensive overview for 2015. We further welcome the focused and results-oriented format of this year's annual report. The extensive reach of the IOM clearly demonstrates that it fully embraces and continues to fulfil its role as

the global lead agency on migration. It is a role which is both fundamental for the Organization and indispensable for the international community. This is all the more so, as we collectively harness our efforts to implement the migration-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals; migration dimensions of the Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction Framework and the Paris Agreement, the New York Declaration for refugees and migrants and other intergovernmentally agreed commitments.

We commend the extraordinary leadership and advocacy of the Director-General in ensuring that Member States' vision for the Organization continues to be realized. One crowning achievement, in this regard, is the signing of the relationship agreement, on 19 September 2016, in the margins of the high level summit on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, bringing the IOM into related agency status with the United Nations. This represented a convergence of historic moments for the IOM and for international migration governance. We therefore congratulate Director-General Swing and his entire team, along with the current and former Chairs of the *Working Group on IOM-UN relations and the IOM Strategy*, for their unwavering and tireless efforts toward this end. We trust that this strategic development will strengthen the voice of the IOM, while serving as an important symbol of the role of partnership in global approaches to migration. We urge the Council to ensure the IOM is adequately equipped make the most of this new relationship and express our support for the continuity of the Working Group. This will be especially important as we work toward the 2018 intergovernmental conference to adopt the global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration, and we fully endorse the key role envisaged for the IOM in this process.

Mr. Chairman,

The 65th anniversary of the establishment of the IOM is cause for both celebration and reflection. On the occasion of this important milestone, we are reminded that, despite its increasing complexity, prevalence and priority on the international agenda, the phenomenon of migration is not new. What is now needed however are new and innovative approaches to the challenges and opportunities which it presents. For over six decades, the IOM has been working steadily and progressively for the benefit of the world's migrants and has evolved into a key actor in 21st century migration. This is an achievement of which it can be proud.

Mr. Chairman,

For The Bahamas, as a Small Island Developing State with porous maritime borders, the challenge of irregular migration remains acute. For this reason, we consider it crucial to address the root causes of these migration flows, including the impact of climate change and natural disasters. Working to dismantle the criminal human smuggling and trafficking networks which exploit such flows must also remain among our top priorities. As noted in the recently launched IOM Report on Migrant Smuggling Data and Research, *the challenge of migrant smuggling is proving a severe test to States in both managing their borders and fulfilling their responsibilities to protect migrants' rights*. The role of international development and cooperation are essential to solutions in this regard, as is dialogue between countries of origin, transit and destination. Further, The Bahamas is of the view that the positive aspects of migration must be fully harnessed as part of effective migration management and protecting human rights. This approach was recently reaffirmed by the Rt. Hon. Perry Christie, Prime Minister of The Bahamas, in his address at the high level meeting of the General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. We therefore welcome the continued work of the IOM in the area of countering migrant smuggling and note the need to promote a broadened evidence base in this crucial area; particularly for the Caribbean region.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite an increasingly challenging migratory landscape, the year 2016 has been one of many successes for the IOM and for international migration governance. The Bahamas assures that it will do its part to contribute to future successes in the pivotal years to come.

I thank you.