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REMARKS TO GLOBAL FORUM ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT
Réduit, 21 November 2012

Delivered by Peter Sutherland, Special Representative for Migration and Development

Your Excellency, Dr. the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister
Your Excellency, Hon Charles Gaëtan Xavier Luc Duval, Minister of Finance and
Economic Development (TBC)
Mr. Ali Mansoor, Financial Secretary (TBC)
Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Secretary General, ACP Group of States
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for this opportunity to address you. I had wanted to attend in person, and have previously made it a priority to participate in this Global Forum, because I attach such great importance to your work.

You gather in an historic setting.

Mauritius is a country of migrants where the fusion of great cultures is on display everywhere.

Here, neighbours celebrate different religions by bringing each other traditional sweets and opening their festivities to all.

Mauritius has rightly been called *la nation arc en ciel* [the rainbow nation].

I thank the Government for hosting this important forum in this inspiring environment.

The struggle of migrants is evident around the world.

To cite just one example, the Gulf of Aden saw more than 100,000 people cross from the Horn of Africa last year alone. This year, there could be as many as 30 per cent more people fleeing hunger, disaster, conflict and poverty over that dangerous crossing.

The notorious smugglers running the small boats have thrown passengers overboard. Whole ships have capsized. The migrants spend 36 hours without food, water or sense of when their nightmare will end.

One survivor said: “Day by day the situation in the boat was getting worse and worse... People were dying and at a certain point I fell unconscious.”

But the migrants have more than empty stomachs and fears that they will not survive. They have hopes, courage and the solid resolve to build a better life.

These individuals are like migration itself – with the right support, they can be a force for prosperity and progress.

In small villages and world-famous capitals, people decide to move for a better life. The complex factors driving migration are the same tough problems at the top of the global agenda: war, natural disasters, economic calamities and even climate change.

When we address the needs of migrants, we can respond to the wider problems that face all people.

And when we empower migrants, they can drive progress for society as a whole.

Dedicated migrants help to build bridges and roads – and after disaster strikes they are often first on the scene repairing the damage.

Migrants face discrimination from those who fear that they are taking away local jobs. But the truth is migrants can create jobs, as innovators and entrepreneurs. Nearly one in every six scientists or engineers in OECD countries is foreign-born. In the United States, three quarters of all patents awarded to universities involve a foreign-born inventor.

By definition, migration is a global phenomenon that demands a global response.

Just six years ago, on the eve of the first Global Forum on Migration and Development, sceptics cautioned that it would be impossible to get any agreement on sensitive subjects like migrants’ rights and irregular migration were too divisive.

They were wrong.

You proved them wrong.

You went forward based on the clear awareness that no country on its own can manage migration, which is a defining characteristic of our age. And you saw the potential for migration to contribute to our well-being as a human family.

This Global Forum carved out space for States to discuss the problems surrounding migration – and its enormous potential to spur development.

But you have not gathered in Mauritius to dwell on your accomplishments over the past six years. You are here because this is a new, decisive moment in addressing this issue.

In just one year, the General Assembly will hold its second High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. Now is the time to commit to action on a range of practical measures.

I challenge each of you to come to the Dialogue with concrete proposals. And I pledge to bring my own practical suggestions so that we can achieve real results.

This Forum also comes as we forge a post-2015 development agenda. I urge you to engage in this process.

With the right policies, migration can promote development.

We need to make pensions more portable, so that someone who retired in one country can more easily bring back her pension when she returns to her country.

We have to make diplomas and skills cross borders, so that an educated migrant does not leave behind her credentials and can fulfil her potential.

Rather than prevent migrants from leaving, we need international cooperation to train tomorrow's global workforce.

We should reduce red tape to make it easier for immigrants to start new ventures.

And we have to invest in measures to facilitate legal migration. The benefits of migration are much higher when it occurs in a safe, orderly and legal fashion. The price of irregular movements is far too high, especially for women and children.

Developing countries increasingly understand the power and potential of migrants.

Governments are encouraging their migrant communities to invest in their home countries – and to return so they can bring back their talents.

Last year, more than \$350 billion was sent to developing countries by migrants. But the costs of these remittances are still too high. Migrants may work for hours just to earn pennies. Through hard living and painful savings, they send money back home. That money feeds families, keeps children in school, and improves health. It should not be subject to exorbitant fees.

The world has a new treaty to help improve the rights of millions of migrant workers, especially women. But that treaty – the International Labour Organisation's Domestic Workers Convention – has only been ratified by three countries.

I congratulate Mauritius for being one of them. And I call on all countries to ratify that Convention as well as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Excellencies,

The Government of Mauritius has kindly given books to every delegate.

One is by the author Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio.

When he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2008, Mr. Le Clézio expressed the hope that men and women in our time would have the right “to express their identity, to claim their right to speak, and to be heard in all their diversity.”

Mr. Le Clézio, himself a son of Mauritius and France, celebrated the diversity that migration brings.

Virtually all countries in the world are simultaneously countries of destination, origin and transit for international migrants. Our challenge is to help migrants so that they can help the countries where they travel and the societies where they live.

We have the evidence. We have the experience. And we have the energy to make a difference.

Now let us reach our end goal: to manage migration as a force for development.

Thank you.