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### U.S. and Bahamian Officials Address the Opening of the Caribbean's Regional Conference on Mixed Migration Issues

May 22, 2013



Sheldon Pitterman, UNHCR; Cleola Hamilton, Parliamentary Secretary, MFA and Immigration; U.S. Chargé d'Affaires John Dinkelman; Deputy Prime Minister, Philip Davis; Robert Paiva, IOM and Phillip Miller, MFA and Immigration. (Photo State Dept.)

On Wednesday, May 22, the Caribbean's Regional Conference on the Protection of Vulnerable Persons in Mixed Migration Flows with a focus on "Promoting Cooperation and Identification of Good Practices" opened at the British Colonial Hilton Hotel. The two-day conference is sponsored by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Among the officials on hand for the opening were U.S. Chargé d'Affaires John Dinkelman, Deputy Prime Minister, Philip Davis, Ms. Cleola Hamilton, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Mr. Robert Paiva, IOM's Regional Director for Central and North America and the

Caribbean and Mr. Sheldon Pitterman, UNHCR's regional representative for the U.S. and the Caribbean.

Officials from nineteen Caribbean countries are participating in the conference that will address a number of issues including: cooperation and responses to mixed migration, data collection and analysis in natural disaster mobility, entry systems, rescue at sea, protection of trafficking victims and protection of collecting data.

In his remarks, Chargé Dinkelman used the opportunity to encourage regional Caribbean coordination and cooperation on migration issues and responses. Dinkelman also recognized the strides made by the government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas in improving its refugee and asylum seeker practices.

"Through this forum, we have the opportunity to develop regional systems for information sharing and mutual support and to maintain these links and advocate for change," he said.

Chargé Dinkelman pointed out that the conference serves to promote dialogue and understanding among partners, and stressed that the information shared must lead to concrete commitments and results, including the development of national action plans, increased dialogue between governments and civil society and regularizing bilateral and regional dialogues.

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