



Ministerial Statement
By
Senator, The Hon. Michael M. Fahy, JP
Minister of Home Affairs

Wednesday, March 18, 2015

Ninth International Labour Meeting; Nassau Bahamas

Madam President, further to a press release on March 2, 2015, in which I publicly announced that I would be attending the Ninth International Labour Meeting, I stand today to provide an update on that Meeting. The meeting was hosted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean in collaboration with the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, with all associated costs, including flights, hotel and most food being fully funded by the ILO. The meeting was held at the British Colonial Hilton in Nassau on March 3rd and 4th under theme “*Decent Work for Sustainable Development.*” The Acting Permanent Secretary, Dr. Danette Ming, attended the meeting with me.

Madam President, over 15 ministers with responsibility for labour, as well as permanent secretaries and high-level officials from 22 countries and territories of the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean attended the meeting. The opening ceremony was nothing less than all of the pomp and circumstance led by the Royal Bahamas Police Force Band playing the National Anthem of the Bahamas. Ms. Nicole Campbell, Permanent

Secretary, Ministry of Labour and National Insurance, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas served as the Master of Ceremonies. We were officially welcomed by Mr. Giovanni di Cola, Director, ILO Decent Work Team and Office of the Caribbean. Addresses then followed by Mr. Guy Ryder, Director-General, ILO and Dr. Douglas Slater, Assistant Secretary General, Human and Social Development, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat and the key address was given by The Right Honourable Perry Christie, MP, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. In his address, Prime Minister Christie referred to the issue of youth employment in the Caribbean and warned that *“we ignore it at our peril.”* He also stated, *“when people are desperate and they are young and they cannot realistically aspire to a life of dignity in the workplace, then you have trouble on your backyard.”* Prime Minister Christie asked all delegates to keep this in mind when deliberating during the meeting and concluded his address by saying *“we have an extraordinary challenge ahead of us.”*

Madam President, the Honourable Shane Gibson, MP, Minister of Labour and National Insurance, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas also gave remarks and Mr. Robert Farquharson, Director of Labour, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas communicated the vote of thanks. On March 3rd, a cocktail reception for all delegates was hosted by the Minister of Labour and National Insurance at Government House, the official residence of the Governor-General Marguerite Pindling.

Madam President, with an 8:30a.m. start on both days, a total of six (6) sessions were held with twenty-seven presentations. The overarching main themes of each session were:

Session I: Assessing the Implementation of the Caribbean Labour Agenda – An Update Towards Achieving the Conclusions of the 8th Ministers of Labour Meeting, 2013;

Session II: CARICOM and ILO working together to implement the Decent Work Agenda in the Caribbean and priorities expressed by the Ministers of Labour;

Session III: Regional Tripartite Social Dialogue Mechanism;

Session IV: Creating Job Opportunities and Developing Skills for Youth Employment and Productivity in the Caribbean;

Session V: Climate Change and Impact on Jobs & Sharing Experiences Aimed at Greening the Economy for Sustainable Development; and

Session VI: Regional Representation and Capacity Building.

Madam President, on March 4, a closed session was held for all Ministers of Labour. As the Minister responsible for labour (or for the Department of Workforce Development), during the closed session, I shared the work done to date with respect to the programmes the Government has put in place to assist with protecting jobs for Bermudians; i.e. the new Work Permit Policies, the introduction of the Government Job Board, and the National Training Plan. As you are aware, the new Work Permit Policies came into force on March 1st. While the Policies come under the remit of the Department of Immigration, there is a direct correlation between the Policies and the Government Job Board. The Government Job Board will, in Phase 2, further assist Bermudians with proactively identifying when work permits

will expire and what qualifications and academia are required to fill vacant posts, and it will effect a process for job-readiness.

Madam President, during the closed session, as Ministers, we did consider the Prime Minister's statements from the opening ceremony. There was a discussion relating to the need for each territory to identify ways to train, develop and employ young people. It was this discussion that gave rise to my input with respect to the National Training Plan. I expressed that the Bermuda Government decided that a definitive plan was needed to establish training and development processes and programmes that would readily engage and enhance the education levels and skills of Bermudian young people. As the discussion continued, it was revealed that each territory shared a common problem – that of inconsistent work ethics by our young people (during periods of part-time employment). It is my hope that our National Training Plan, Part 2, will assist in the achievement of our goal to ensure children of all ages have the requisite skills and knowledge that will make them equipped to take up employment prior to their entry into the world of work. My colleagues from the Caribbean were keen to learn more about our local initiatives. I invited my them to search the Ministry's website for more details and we agreed to undertake a collaborate approach so that we could learn from one another.

Finally Madam President, I recognize that decent work for sustainable development it vital. As such, the key takeaways from the meeting for me included the following:

- To complete Phase 2 of the National Training Plan;
- To find creative and innovative ways to attract young people to jobs that have scarce or no human resources;

- To continue the work to re-write Bermuda's outdated labour legislation; and
- To collaborate more frequently with other Ministers of labour on issues that jointly affect us.

Thank you, Madam President.