



**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE
AT THE OPENING OF A NEW PARLIAMENTARY SESSION
FEBRUARY 15, 2006
H.E. ARTHUR D. HANNA, GOVERNOR-GENERAL**

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

We meet early in this New Year to begin a new session of Parliament, the second since my Government was elected to office in May of 2002.

The session we inaugurate today will continue my Government's efforts to provide safe and secure communities, alleviate poverty and to provide growth and prosperity for the Bahamian people.

My Government shall give primacy, therefore, to meeting the following challenges:

- To grow our economy so as to provide ever increasing benefits and prosperity for all our people throughout our archipelago;
- To protect and secure our borders against illegal immigration;
- To provide the laws, policies, resources and tools necessary for the successful campaign against crime and lawlessness and for the more efficient delivery of judicial services;
- To create the necessary policies and legislation to modernize, advance and meet the needs of essential public service delivery in the areas of poverty alleviation, health, education and housing;

- To support and protect the most vulnerable in our society, particularly the poor, the elderly, the disabled and those in special needs;
 - To protect and preserve the environment;
 - To create a comprehensive system of land use planning; and
 - To provide training programmes relevant to our developmental needs.
- In broad terms those are the aims to which my Government intends to apply itself with special determination and vigour during the new parliamentary session we open today.

RE-INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

My Government will re-introduce for early consideration the following Bills tabled during the last session of Parliament:

- A Bill for an Act to enable The Bahamas to become a Member of The International Development Association.
- A Bill for an Act to amend the Supreme Court Act.
- A Bill for an Act to Protect Persons Appearing as Witnesses in Judicial Proceedings.
- A Bill for an Act to provide for The Establishment and Conferment of National Honours and for connected purposes.
- A Bill for an Act to Institutionalize the Recognition by a Nation of the Contribution made to its Emancipation and Growth by its National Heroes.
- A Bill for an act to Repeal the Police Act.
- A Bill for an Act to Prohibit the Payment out of the Consolidated Fund of a Prime Minister's Pension while any former holder of that office is still in Parliament.
- A Bill for an Act to amend The Professional Engineers Act.
- A Bill for an Act to Amend the Rent Control and to Increase the Ceiling on Controlled Rent.

THE ECONOMY

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

The Bahamian economy is in remarkably robust condition today. This is not the result of accident. It is due instead to a variety of factors not the least of which is the disciplined and prudent management of public finances to which my Government has studiously adhered since May of 2002. Equally noteworthy is my Government's promotion of economic expansion through sound and sensible

policies that have had wide appeal to investors both foreign and domestic over the past 3 ½ years.

Indeed, my Government's guidance and management of the economy in that period has been instrumental in making The Bahamas one of the most buoyant and competitive economies in the region.

A strong economy provides the launching pad for substantial improvements in the living standards of all Bahamians. A strong economy means more and better employment opportunities and more and better opportunities for business development for Bahamian entrepreneurs.

A strong economy also means rising Government revenues which can be allocated to progressively relieve the tax burden on lower-income Bahamian households and to expand the range and quality of essential Government services.

Indeed, since 2002, rather than increasing the burden of taxation by introducing new taxes, my Government continues instead to put primary emphasis on maximizing revenue collection from existing taxes and duties and decreasing the burden of taxation. The recent amendments to the Stamp Act represent an excellent example of this emphasis and have already achieved impressive results.

My Government is committed to strengthen revenue administration through improved use of technology and analysis. Where considered necessary, amendments will continue to be made to existing revenue laws to close loopholes, to enhance the revenue collection process and to reduce leakages of revenue.

GOVERNMENT TO THE PEOPLE

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

My Government reaffirms its commitment to providing government's services on-line through The Bahamas Government On-line Initiative.

The Registrar General's Department is already on-line. Other Ministries and Departments will follow.

Special programmes will be put in place so that government will regularly account to the people.

ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

My Government will continue its strategy of attracting high quality international and domestic investment but greater emphasis will now be placed on providing incentives and concessions for the more rapid development of Bahamian entrepreneurial talent.

My Government is determined to spread the economic blessings of our land amongst the widest number of persons possible. This will enable a new cadre of Bahamian entrepreneurs with the talent, the drive, the management expertise and the financial backing needed to succeed not only locally but in the highly competitive global environment.

A new Domestic Investment Board will therefore be formed to act as the primary catalyst for the management of applications for assistance from Bahamian entrepreneurs. The Domestic Investment Board will cut red tape for Bahamians investors. Small businesses will also be supported by enhancing the relationship between the Development Bank, BAIC, the various government loan guarantee programmes, the government sponsored venture capital programme and the Board.

FINANCIAL SERVICES INDUSTRY

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

Our Financial Services industry continues to hold vast, untapped potential for the Bahamian economy and the Bahamian people.

My Government will therefore:

- Continue to focus on the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Investment and the Strategic Plan for Financial Services; and
- Continue to partner with the private sector to bring to market a new array of financial products and services that will maintain the competitive advantage of The Bahamas in international private banking, estate-planning and private wealth management.

To give further support to the industry, my Government intends to place before you a Bill for an Act to Regulate Private Trust Companies. A Bill for a new External Insurance Act is also expected to be laid before you.

My Government will continue to be vigilant in its goal of being a “One-Stop-Shop” for investors, both local and foreign. In addition, my Government will continue to review its application procedures with a view to further expediting the processing of applications.

HOTEL CORPORATION OF THE BAHAMAS

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

My Government has successfully completed the privatization of its Cable Beach holdings with Baha Mar Development Co. Ltd. for the development of a mega world-class resort destination.

The Hotel Corporation of The Bahamas will focus in the immediate future on securing suitable investors to develop its extensive properties in Andros and Eleuthera and other Government-owned sites in other Family Islands, consistent with my Government’s anchor resort policy for major islands.

The Report On Poverty shows that the greatest incidence of poverty occurs in the southern Bahamas. This fact was a catalyst in my government’s decision to enter into an historic public private sector joint venture between The Hotel Corporation of The Bahamas and the I Group of Boston.

The joint venture entity, to be known as Mayaguana Island Developers Ltd., will spearhead the orderly development on the island of Mayaguana of an eco-sensitive resort community at the island of Mayaguana. It will have all the infrastructural, social and educational facilities expected of a development of this magnitude.

A whole new range of economic opportunities for Bahamian families and entrepreneurs, building and service contractors, and resort workers will open up as a result of this pioneering venture in Mayaguana.

An initiative to develop Inagua as an eco-sensitive destination is on-going.

During this session, a bill will be laid before you for the establishment of a Tourism Development Corporation to replace the Hotel Corporation of The Bahamas. The role of this new corporation will be to engender greater ownership of Bahamians in the tourism industry, whether as owners of resort properties or as providers of goods and support services.

TOURISM

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

The Bahamas achieved a second record-setting year in total tourist arrivals in 2005, receiving more than five million visitors.

Demand for the Islands of The Bahamas remains high.

Over the course of this session of Parliament, significant improvements in the following areas will reap rewards for The Islands of The Bahamas.

- Downtown Redevelopment, including the Straw Market;
- Expanded and improved airport facilities;
- New or expanded cruise port facilities;

On the service-improvement front; renewed focus on the training and re-training of persons employed in the tourism sector and Awareness Programmes for the general public will be undertaken.

A new Time Share Act will be introduced to expand the time share business in The Bahamas.

My Government will also introduce a bill for a Film Incentives Act to stimulate the expansion of this sector of the tourism industry and to create greater opportunities for Bahamians in the film industry.

NATIONAL SECURITY

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

My Government continues to be committed to ensuring the safety and security of our communities and to the maintenance of the territorial sovereignty of The Bahamas.

My Government will therefore spare no effort to reduce crime and lawlessness in our land and to better defend our borders against illegal immigrants, drug traffickers and poachers and the possibility of terrorist acts.

ROYAL BAHAMAS POLICE FORCE

My Government will continue the process of modernization of the Royal Bahamas Police Force.

The enrollment of the Force will be expanded as will its involvement in school

policing, tourism policing, and the highly successful and internationally acclaimed Urban Renewal Programme, which has been proven to be effective in the prevention of crime.

My Government will lay before you a Bill for a Police Service Act 2006. Whilst society can never compensate for officers injured or fallen in the line of duty, this Bill will ensure that their spouses and dependents are properly compensated and maintained. It is also intended that this Bill shall have retroactive effect for those fallen in the line of duty and that these provisions shall apply to all law enforcement agencies.

My Government will also build on the capacity of the Police for rapid response and high visibility in communities throughout The Bahamas.

My Government will effect improvements at the forensic laboratory, including the ability to conduct DNA testing. Legislation will be introduced to effect this initiative.

My Government continues to be concerned about the use of firearms and illegal weapons to perpetrate crimes of violence. As a consequence, My Government will design and place before you a broad range of strategies and legislation to combat crime. These will include amendments to the Bail Act.

My Government will continue to intensify its efforts to interdict illegal drugs and drug smuggling.

ROYAL BAHAMAS DEFENCE FORCE

The Royal Bahamas Defence Force in our archipelagic nation continues to represent the front line in our ongoing war against illegal immigration and poaching.

Having engaged in a review, measures will be taken to expand and deepen the training capacity of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force.

The enrollment of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force will be increased as well. Efforts will be made to continue to bring Royal Bahamas Defence Force marines more fully into the national effort to interdict drug trafficking.

Improvements in the conditions of service will be effected in the Royal Bahamas Defence Force.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

My Government is deeply concerned about the problem of illegal immigration in our country. We understand and appreciate the mounting concerns of the

Bahamian people over this issue. We shall resolutely protect the integrity of our borders.

Creative and innovative measures will be taken in this regard, including the amendment of the Immigration Act to make provision for the following matters:

- To more effectively combat the illegal trafficking in human persons that has grown so significantly of late;
- To increase the punishment of persons who assist in the illegal landing of aliens; and
- To increase the punishment of persons who employ illegal immigrants without obtaining the requisite work permit.

Policies and strategies will be implemented to address the circumstances and issues arising from the existence of communities of illegal immigrants. Steps will be taken to eliminate the illegal occupancy of land throughout The Bahamas.

Legislation relating to the management of refugee and or asylum claims will also be introduced.

PRISON SECURITY

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

My Government will continue the process of modernization of Her Majesty's Prison.

My Government will lay before you The Bahamas Department of Corrections Bill (2006) to replace the Prison Act.

The Remand Court in the vicinity of the Prison will be completed by the end of 2006. This will eliminate the need to transport persons on remand along the streets of New Providence.

My Government's initiatives will enhance security systems at the Prison and increase training resources as well as enhance conditions of service for Prison Officers.

My Government will also continue with the necessary planning for a new, modern, maximum security prison.

IMPROVING THE DELIVERY OF JUDICIAL SERVICES

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

My Government recognizes that access to an efficient and fair justice system is essential to our democracy and the rule of law.

My Government will provide every support to the Judiciary in implementing its case management systems, using information technology, revised rules and improved facilities and resources to address the backlog of cases.

My Government remains resolute in protecting the judicial process from any interference or intimidation of witnesses. Therefore, my Government will proceed with a Justice Protection Bill in this session of Parliament to criminalize acts which impede the co-operation of persons as witnesses in court. This new measure will also establish a Witness Protection Programme to provide protection and safety for witnesses who may be the object of intimidation and threats of harm.

My Government will bring to Parliament very early in this session an amendment to the Jurors Act to provide for alternate jurors in criminal trials in the Supreme Court. This will avoid the loss of time and resources when a juror, for whatever reason, has to be excused.

Further, my Government will establish a career path within the Public Service for Court Reporters, to improve the efficiency of the recording of judicial proceedings.

Initiatives will be taken to address the rights of victims of crime.

The hard work and diligence of my Government have led to the removal of The Bahamas from the monitoring list of the Financial Action Task Force (“FATF”). My Government will continue to increase the resources and capacity of the Office of the Attorney General to respond in a timely manner to judicial and regulatory requests for international co-operation.

Further, my Government is committed to improving the terms and conditions of service of legal officers.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

The per capita income in The Bahamas is \$17,883, one of the highest in the region – an indication of our strong economy.

The 2001 Bahamas Living Conditions Survey, received by my Government in 2005, has for the first time provided a factual assessment of the level of poverty in our country. The survey found that more than 50% of the country's poor are children 14 years or younger.

At the same time 1 in 12 residents in New Providence and Grand Bahama and 1 in 5 in the Southern Islands are living under the poverty line of \$2,863 per annum. Five percent of households in The Bahamas live below the poverty line.

My Government finds this state of affairs intolerable and unacceptable.

My Government has, therefore, designed policies to address this issue and will resolutely continue our innovative empowerment and support programmes.

My Government shall also present initiatives to assist families experiencing challenges with the support and control of children and to increase the efficiency of rehabilitative efforts and to promote alternatives to the sentencing of juveniles, including the mandate that the child and parent attend parenting or counseling sessions.

The following legislation will be introduced: -

- (i) Affiliation Proceedings (Amendment) Bill
- (ii) Domestic Violence & Sexual Harassment (Amendment) Bill
- (iii) Children & Young Persons (Administration of Justice) (Amendment) Bill

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR THE DISABLED

My Government, after consultation, will also introduce legislation to protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

LAND POLICY

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

My Government, in consultation with all stakeholders, including the Bahamian public will create a new land policy. This land policy will address, amongst other things; availability of land for current and future generations of Bahamians and beach access. The policy will also include a regulatory framework, environmental components and monitoring mechanisms.

My Government has also initiated a project that will address key land issues including the development of a modern land registration system, the better utilization of commonage and the availability of Crown Land to Bahamians.

My Government is finalizing Master Development Plans for the Islands of Eleuthera, Exuma and Mayaguana. A plan for New Providence is expected to be completed by the end of 2006.

AVIATION

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

Legislation will be laid before Parliament for the renaming of Nassau International Airport as The Sir Lynden Pindling International Airport in tribute to the memory of the late Founding Father of our Nation.

My Government recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Vancouver Airport Services, a company with worldwide airport management experience, for the operation, management and re-development of Nassau International Airport for a term of 10 years. Nassau International Airport, a principal gateway to our nation, will be transformed into a world-class facility.

Legislation will also be introduced to support airport development and enhancement, including the creation of a Civil Aviation Authority.

My Government will install and inaugurate the ASR-9 Radar which was recently acquired at a cost of more than \$8 million.

METEOROLOGY

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

My Government will improve its preparedness to combat the effects of natural weather disasters by the use of the Doppler Radar System. My Government will further enhance its capabilities by a Direct Readout Ground Station which will collect and post information from 14 major islands on the Internet.

MARITIME AFFAIRS

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

My Government is committed to the modernization of legislation governing maritime affairs. My Government will introduce legislation to amend the key

maritime laws. A commercial Watersports Bill to provide regulatory oversight for commercial watersports activity in The Bahamas will be introduced to the Parliament.

ROAD TRAFFIC

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

My Government will introduce legislation to create a unified bussing system. My Government is concerned about road safety and will introduce a series of initiatives and legislation, including seat belt and breathalyzer provisions to address this critical matter.

PUBLIC UTILITIES **WATER & SEWERAGE CORPORATION**

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

Since May 2002, my Government has demonstrated its commitment to the implementation of a Long-Term Strategic Plan to ensure that each and every citizen of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas has access to a high quality, reliable potable water supply system and a modern sewerage collection, treatment and disposal network in compliance with local and international standards.

My Government will continue to provide adequate supplies of potable water in New Providence and the Family Islands through public private sector partnership.

BAHAMAS TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY LTD.

My Government is pleased to report that The Bahamas Telecommunications Company Limited has been able to reduce its Domestic Long Distance Rates by some fifty-five (55%) percent and its International Long Distance Rates by some 70%.

My Government remains committed to the privatization of The Bahamas Telecommunications Company.

My Government is committed to enabling affordable, reliable communication across The Bahamas. This will be accomplished by BTC's fibre-optic cable link of the entire Bahamas and by cable television services. These links will also enable the entire Bahamas to receive cable television service.

BAHAMAS ELECTRICITY CORPORATION

During 2006, the Bahamas Electricity Corporation, at a cost of some \$21.8 Million, will conclude the installation of three additional generators. The addition of these units to the BEC and Paradise Island network will increase capacity and improve reliability and efficiency. Substantial cost savings should also be realized through lower fuel costs. These savings will be passed on to consumers as indeed was done for the first time in 2003 under my Government.

PUBLIC WORKS

The maintenance and continued expansion of public infrastructure is a major priority of my government. Major road construction works presently in progress in New Providence, Grand Bahama, Bimini, Russell Island, and mainland Eleuthera will be completed. The hurricane restoration project throughout the Family Islands as well as in the western portion of New Providence will also continue.

The other important elements of my Government's ongoing programme for infrastructural development, whether in terms of roadworks, bridges, health care facilities, docks or other construction activity, will be laid out in detail.

HOUSING

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

Recognising the right of Bahamians to decent, affordable housing, my Government has constructed more than eight hundred (800) homes since assuming office and is now in the process of constructing an additional one thousand homes (1,000) in New Providence, Grand Bahama and the Family Islands.

My Government will also continue the construction of additional rental units and will develop new housing initiatives, particularly in islands experiencing rapid economic expansion.

In tandem with these initiatives, my Government, through The Bahamas Mortgage Corporation, will provide assistance to the Ministry of Housing & National Insurance with financing of subdivisions totaling in excess of \$42 million dollars and for the completion of a corporate office complex to house the Bahamas Mortgage Corporation, the Department of Housing and the Ministry of Housing.

URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAMME

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

Recognising the success of the Urban Renewal Programme and its positive effect on communities and citizens, my Government will allocate more resources to expand the programme to communities across The Bahamas.

EDUCATION

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

My Government recognizes that education is the primary means to sustain and advance the economic, social and cultural growth and development of The Bahamas. Far reaching initiatives will be introduced to continue the transformation of the system of education.

My Government, determined to give all Bahamian children a head start, will continue its expansion of pre-school education by building additional pre-school units in New Providence and the Family Islands.

Reaching out to children of special needs, my Government will continue to implement the recommendations of the National Commission on Special Education, especially in relation to early identification, implementation and remediation.

The infrastructural requirements of the education system will be addressed by the construction of new schools, the modernization of existing schools and a dedicated maintenance programme.

My Government reaffirms its commitment to provide quality and equity in the delivery of education throughout The Bahamas. A National Distance Education Programme will be established. A Bill for the establishment of the Accreditation and Equivalency Council will be introduced

Legislation will also be introduced to accredit all institutions of learning.

My Government appreciates the requirements of aligning technical and vocational education and training to industry demand and the rapid expanding economy. The Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute will be restructured to improve the delivery of technical and vocational education and training, and major initiatives to equip Bahamians, particularly those who are presently unemployed, will be established.

My Government will continue to transform the College of The Bahamas into an

accredited university.

HEALTH CARE

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

My Government remains convinced that health care is a basic right to which all people are entitled as a matter of moral imperative.

Therefore, my Government will continue with its announced programme of building modern community clinics and mini hospitals across The Bahamas. Major improvements will also be made to the Princess Margaret and Rand Memorial Hospitals and to the Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre and other health care facilities.

The Healthy Lifestyle Initiative will be introduced throughout The Bahamas.

THE ENVIRONMENT

My Government will continue to assiduously pursue policies to protect our pristine environment, a gift from God for generations of Bahamians yet unborn.

Legislation will be introduced to enhance and strengthen the regulatory and enforcement powers of the BEST Commission.

NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:**

My Government is convinced that a fully functioning, sustainable system of National Health Insurance is necessary.

My Government will continue with extensive public consultations in this regard and has mandated an independent review of the costing.

PUBLIC SERVICE

**Madam President and Honourable Senators
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly;**

In furtherance of my government's new training thrust, an Institute for Public

Service Training will be created.

A comprehensive review of the system for engagement and pensions for all classes of public employees will be conducted.

Legislation will be introduced to amend the Parliamentary Pensions Act.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

My Government will also amend the Passport Act. My Government will purchase a system for machine-readable passports which will introduce a significantly higher level of security for Bahamian passports.

My Government will cause Foreign Service Orders to be laid before you to establish and regulate the terms and conditions of service for diplomats and Consular Officers who serve at home and abroad.

YOUTH, SPORTS & CULTURE

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of the House of Assembly:**

It is the intention of My Government to erect multi-purpose facilities, inclusive of Track and Field, Softball, Baseball, Basketball, and Volleyball, on a scheduled basis in the Family Islands.

My Government will immediately commence the construction of sports facilities at the Doris Johnson High School and the C. V. Bethel High School.

My Government has successfully completed a pilot project towards the establishment of a National Youth Service and is committed to expanding the programme.

My Government is committed to creating opportunities for our youth to maximize their potential so as to enable them to participate fully in the social and economic life of our country. In this regard, we will continue to pursue initiatives to empower them.

CULTURE

Culture touches every facet of our national life. It contributes more than anything else to the consolidation of our national identity and an awareness of our uniqueness.

My Government will redouble its efforts to find and support Bahamian novelists, playwrights, poets, artists, musicians and actors.

The Clifton site has been purchased and is now being developed into a National Heritage Park.

My Government will place before you legislation to establish a National Endowment for the Arts.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AGRICULTURE & FISHERIES; CO-OPERATIVES

**Mr. President and Honourable Senators,
Madam Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly,**

Amendments to the Local Government Act will be introduced to enable the system of local government to operate more efficiently.

Regulations to give effect to the Cooperatives Act passed in 2003 will also be promulgated.

The Food Safety legislation will be modernized to meet the current world situation with respect to international trade and new and emerging food safety concerns.

The Animal Control Act will be amended to create greater responsibility and accountability of owners of animals.

The Public Slaughter House Act will be amended to permit the designation of locations other than New Providence as approved slaughter facilities and to allow for the licencing of facilities as necessary.

My Government will also introduce a number of initiatives within the area of agriculture in an effort to effect rapid and significant results. Of particular note in this regard, my Government will establish a demonstration and training farm at North Andros. This demonstration and training facility will be associated with the Ministry Agricultural Fisheries, the College of The Bahamas and the National Youth Programme.

My Government will expand the cascarilla industry in the Southeastern Bahamas.

CONCLUSION

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of the House of Assembly:**

The measures that I have outlined to you today will in their totality move the

Commonwealth of The Bahamas and its people to unprecedented heights.

Unprecedented heights may be measured by the strength of our economy.

Today, my government challenges all Bahamians to another measure – a measure where the weakest amongst us is safe and our society is secure, cohesive and strong – a society where no Bahamian is left behind and persons who may have failed are empowered to seize the opportunity of a second chance.

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly;**

If we are to be successful in this effort, we must become our brother's keeper and each Bahamian regardless of race, denomination or gender, experiences their God-given meaning, dignity and value.

Each Bahamian must also accept the challenge to fully develop their God given talent.

**Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honorable House of Assembly;**

As we move forward, upward, and onward together let every section of the Bahamian orchestra – the Church, private sector, charity groups and Government come together to create symphony that will resound the length and breadth of The Bahamas – a symphony that will cause all to acknowledge The Bahamas as the best little nation in the world.

May Almighty God rest upon your counsels and guide your deliberations.