



The
Bahamas

Statement

by

**The Right Honourable Hubert A. Ingraham, M.P.
Prime Minister and Minister of Finance**

at the

**Sixty-Third Session
of the
United Nations General Assembly**

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Mr. President,

On behalf of the Government and people of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, I congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of this sixty-third session of the General Assembly, and I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation. I should also like to take this opportunity to commend H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his stewardship of the sixty-second session, just concluded.

Mr. President,

The recent hurricane season has not been kind to our region. Especially hard hit was the Turks and Caicos Islands, Cuba, and Haiti. Because of its ongoing political, economic and social problems, the condition of Haiti leaves much to be desired. Therefore, The Bahamas is especially pleased that the United Nations has remained actively engaged in Haiti and hopes that the much-desired improvement of economic conditions in Haiti will soon eventuate. Above all else, Haiti requires the establishment and maintenance of peace and security.

The Bahamas commends the work of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). We urge the continued extension of the mandate of MINUSTAH until such time that the foundations for peace, security and development are firmly laid in Haiti.

As the current Chair of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), I am pleased that the Caribbean Community (Caricom) has been able to contribute to the relief efforts in Haiti, but its needs remain at proportions that can only be addressed by the international community.

We are therefore greatly heartened by the “Flash Appeal” for Haiti under the auspices of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Mr. President,

The Bahamas commends the Secretary-General for this opportunity to assess our global commitment.

We first committed ourselves to the creation of a “society for all” in 1995. Five years later we recommitted ourselves to this objective and signed on to the Development Agenda, a noble objective.

We are now at the halfway point and we must judge for ourselves whether the progress made has been good enough.

We believe that efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and ultimately create a society for all, must be carried out in tandem with steps to achieve full employment and decent work for all.

Mr. President,

The implementation of the MDGs is simply the implementation of my Government's philosophy and programmes.

It is with considerable satisfaction that I am able to report that The Bahamas has achieved many of the MDG targets and indicators. These areas have received the greatest share of the country's budgetary allocations since our country's independence 35 years ago.

Over a two-year period, assistance to the poor and to low-income families in The Bahamas is being increased by 45 per cent.

Mr. President,

The issue of international migration and development is of particular concern to The Bahamas. We have been burdened for some 60 years now with irregular and unauthorized migration which places increased demands upon The Bahamas' education, health and social services.

And it represents potential national security threats particularly as organized crime networks have become increasingly involved in the cross-border smuggling of illicit drugs firearms, and human cargoes.

Clearly, there remains a need for countries to establish an effective means of matching supply for migration with demand for labour within a safe, legal, humane and orderly

structure to maximize social and human development potential arising from global labour mobility.

The success of any such system requires the development of comprehensive migration policies and also continuing dialogue among supply and receiving states. The Bahamas looks forward to the discussion scheduled to take place during this session on the follow-up to the 2006 High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

Mr. President,

New and emerging problems continue to slow global development; and the current food, energy and financial crisis threaten to erode the gains made over the past 10 years towards ending poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and death.

Apart from the consequential increase in production costs for all consumer goods, the growing cost of energy is affecting the travel plans of many, with direct negative consequences for tourism, the primary industry of The Bahamas.

So too is the persistent challenge of climate change with its dire prognosis for all and most especially for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as The Bahamas where 80% of our landmass is within 1.5 meters of sea level. It is no surprise to find The Bahamas listed among

the 100 countries most vulnerable to the consequences of climate change and sea level rise.

Potential impacts of further rises in temperature not only include environmental degradation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems -- loss of biodiversity, compromised ground water tables, agricultural lands and fishery resources -- but also the social and economic losses which might be expected from dislocation of labour.

It is this reality which informs The Bahamas' desire for urgent action on climate change.

And, the threats to our environment from climate change are exacerbated by the threat created by the continued transshipment of nuclear waste through the waters surrounding my country and other Caribbean states. I renew the call for an end to this potentially perilous activity.

Mr. President,

The increasing number and fury of hurricanes passing through the Caribbean are, I believe, yet another indication of the negative effects of global climate change. These hurricanes have had a devastating effect on a number of countries in our sub- region this year alone.

They pose a singularly peculiar threat to our countries as they are capable, literally in one fell swoop, of wiping out all the developmental gains we have achieved over

many years of hard work. In this vein, I renew the call for a global response to what has been described as a “development emergency”.

We must not only act to achieve the MDGs, but also to meet the goals of the broader UN Development Agenda including the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States (MSI), and the Hyogo Framework for Action.

We strongly support efforts more effectively to utilize the United Nations system to support the important work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including implementation of commitments under the Convention, its Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Action Plan.

My Government has recorded its commitment to preserve our marine and terrestrial environments and to meet the targets established by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity for 2010 and 2012. Indeed, we fully expect to exceed our commitment to conserve at least 20 per cent of the near-shore marine resources across The Bahamas by 2020.

Mr. President,

The current global economic climate presents a formidable challenge to both developed and developing countries.

The Bahamas has established a comparative and competitive advantage in a number of international service industries by laying a solid foundation based upon the Rule of Law with its attendant protection of private property rights, combined with sound macro-economic policies and a commitment to democratic ideals that foster an enduring political stability.

Our participation in the international economic, financial and trading systems has permitted us to embrace opportunities presented by globalization and to achieve reasonable levels of growth and development.

Nevertheless we remain vulnerable to the challenges posed by our size and the limits on our representation in global governance.

Mr. President,

There is a need for effective, permanent representation of developing countries, particularly small developing countries, in international economic, trade and financial institutions, including the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as other bodies like the Financial Stability Forum (FSF) and the Basle Committee.

The Bahamas supports the strengthening of the United Nations Committee of Experts on International Cooperation

on Tax Matters and its upgrade to an intergovernmental body.

It is the view of The Bahamas that international tax matters should be discussed in an open, transparent and inclusive forum, including issues of importance to small developing countries that are not adequately addressed in other organizations.

It is for this and other important reasons that The Bahamas calls for the convening of a major international conference to review the international financial and monetary architecture and global economic governance structures.

The case of small developing countries must be addressed in the context of international systems that are fair, equitable, objective, open and inclusive.

Mr. President,

The Bahamas reaffirms its support for the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform with a view to expanding the membership of that body in both the permanent and non-permanent categories as well as improving its working methods.

International peace and security is important to us all. The Bahamas fully supported the General Assembly's adoption in September 2006 of the United Nations Global

Counter-Terrorism Strategy as a framework for collective action to prevent and combat terrorism.

The Bahamas condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations; and we call for, and commit to, the full implementation of a culture of peace, justice and human development, and respect for all religions and cultures.

I am pleased to inform of my Government's ratification, since taking office last year, of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, the International Convention on the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings and the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention) and its three Protocols.

The Bahamas commends the Secretary General's initiative in organizing the first-ever UN Symposium on Support for the Victims of Terrorism.

Mr. President,

Escalating acts of crime and violence, civil unrest, wars and internal conflicts around the world continue to threaten our efforts to create a just and peaceful international environment.

The 2008 World Drug Report indicates that the supply of illicit drugs is increasing. This has serious consequences for our sub-region. The Bahamas and member States of the Caribbean Community are neither significant producers nor

suppliers of narcotics. We are neither manufacturers nor suppliers of small arms and light weapons.

Yet, the meteoric rise in the illicit trafficking in drugs, small arms and light weapons, illegal migration, and human trafficking through our sub-region creates a formidable challenge to the national security and socio-economic growth and development of our countries.

The Bahamas reiterates the call made by Caricom last July for the illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons to be addressed in a holistic, transparent and legally-binding manner, with renewed commitments for effective and enhanced safeguards.

Winning the war on crime and violence is of utmost importance to my country. We continue to dedicate significant and increased resources, both recurrent and capital, to law enforcement so as to better fight the wave of crime and violence that defies our own description of ourselves.

We continue to engage in bilateral agreements with neighbouring states to tackle the war on drug trafficking. And we continue to advance reforms in our criminal justice and judicial systems.

Mr. President,

We are poised to mark, on December 10th, one of the greatest achievements of this great organization: the 60th

anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The Bahamas reaffirms its commitment to the fundamental principles of human rights, dignity and freedom for all.

The Bahamas commends the entering into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the adoption of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

For more than six decades, human rights, poverty and development, and peace and security have attracted the attention of this assembly. The complexity of these issues, coupled with a lack of good governance and political sensitivity, has too often impeded meaningful advances.

As we celebrate the Declaration's 60th anniversary, I recall the vision of a former First Lady of the United States of America, Eleanor Roosevelt, as expressed in her address at Brandeis University, Massachusetts, on March 8, 1960:

“We are going to have to work for a peaceful world continuously without stopping because differences exist among people. They exist in families, they exist within nations and they will exist in the world. And therefore, without any question you are going to have to work to achieve peace in the world much more continuously than you have ever worked.”

Mr. President, this is as true today as it was 48 years ago.

Thank you.