



National Statement by
Dr. the Hon. Hubert A. Minnis
Prime Minister
Commonwealth of the Bahamas

73rd United Nations General Assembly

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Madam President,

Excellencies,

I congratulate you Madam President on your election to the Presidency of this 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

I wish to assure you and members of the Bureau of the support of my Delegation.

I commend Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who continues to guide the organisation through a process of reform, which is vital for the continued relevance of our organization.

I also pay tribute to the late Kofi Anan, for the immense contribution he made to the UN and the global community.

Madam President,

In this year, marking the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War, it is fitting that the theme for this 73rd Session is: *“Making the United Nations relevant to all people: Global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies”*.

One of the painful lessons taught by the two World Wars was the necessity of nations working together to minimise conflicts and to promote economic and social development.

The relevance of the UN to the global community is without question.

This is not to say, Madam President, that we ought not to strive to achieve more. This is an imperative.

As nations, we must intensify our deliberations and commitments to addressing Climate Change.

Climate change is a clear and present danger to us all, but in particular to low-lying coastal nations like The Bahamas.

We see this in rising sea levels, the loss of coral reefs, the increased volume of acid in our oceans, and more severe and frequent hurricanes and typhoons.

This time last year, The Bahamas, many countries of the Caribbean, and parts of the

United States of America, faced the onslaught of Category 4 or higher hurricanes.

As Hurricane Irma hurled towards The Bahamas, my Government took the difficult decision to evacuate residents from southern islands, to prevent the loss of lives and injury.

Gratefully, we escaped without loss of life, but our southern neighbours were not as fortunate.

As such, I fully support Secretary General Guterres' plan to call a Climate Summit next September to mobilise action and financial support.

As part of such discussions, we must dedicate considerably more energy and resources in building the resilience and sustainability of our island and coastal nations.

Like our neighbours, The Bahamas is trying to rebuild our islands.

However, the consecutive damage of major hurricanes has made this very difficult.

As an archipelago, with many islands stretching approximately 600 miles from north to south, we are required to replicate infrastructure many times over, with already limited resources.

While the delivery of humanitarian aid is essential, it is equally important to focus on

prevention, and the strengthening of capacity building.

Such an approach must be grounded in a comprehensive approach to sustainable development, that addresses, in an integrated manner, the range of issues that are critical to The Bahamas, from disaster risk reduction to to the sustainable use of the world's seas and oceans, to ensure their viability for generations to come.

Tourism is the world's largest industry. It is also the lifeblood of the Bahamian economy.

Millions of tourists travel to The Bahamas annually because of our beautiful turquoise waters and biodiversity.

In this context, The Bahamas has committed to ban single-use plastics by 2020.

The Bahamas looks forward to the successful outcomes of the review of the SAMOA Pathway, the international

framework to advance these and other sustainable development priorities for Small Island Developing States.

The Bahamas will also advocate for a strong outcome of the intergovernmental conference on an international, legally-binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction.

Madam President,

Earlier this week, I participated in the Bloomberg Roundtable on Building Resilient Economies and Preserving Marine Ecosystems in Coastal Commonwealth Nations.

I commend such dialogue.

However, I must stress that The Bahamas and our neighbours are being beaten twice, for circumstances not of our own making.

It is not our island nations that are primarily responsible for the climate change which results in the scourges of hurricanes and other natural disasters.

However, when we respond to national need by borrowing internationally, to seek to restore basic human infrastructure, our debt to GDP ratio rises, risking the possibility of a rating downgrade.

This limits our ability to provide for ourselves, except we are burdened with a price tag too heavy to be borne.

Madam President, a relevant UN should urgently facilitate a meaningful dialogue on the international stage to establish a workable solution.

Furthermore, the adverse impact of global financial inequity is seen in the use of the distorted matrix of GDP per capita as a measurement of national wealth and viability.

This is done without due regard to a country's vulnerabilities and the weight that should be given to localised circumstances.

We remain concerned and disappointed that the application of this matrix causes The Bahamas to be assessed more favourably than it should be for contributions to international organisations, and for the receipt of grants, and international assistance when disaster strikes.

The UN must bring greater focus and action in response to this inequitable issue.

We also reaffirm our support for Cuba's ability to access resources for development to rebuild after disasters.

Similarly, notwithstanding the strong and unwavering commitment to the integrity of our financial services industry, The Bahamas, like other jurisdictions, is in an uphill battle to avoid being blacklisted as a non-cooperative jurisdiction for tax purposes.

The goalposts for cooperation are constantly being moved.

They are inequitably applied, with unfair advantages to some and disadvantages to others.

The Bahamas remains committed to international tax transparency and cooperation, exchange of information, and international regulatory standards, as well as to conduct business in a fair, transparent and competitive manner.

Madam President,

The Bahamas is comprehensively seeking to offer greater opportunities to our disadvantaged urban centres, through revitalisation, economically empowering and poverty alleviation initiatives.

These initiatives have been designed to be consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals.

My Government is committed to the SDGs, and will continue to work with the UN and our other international partners and

domestic stakeholders towards implementation.

Madam Present,

The Bahamas is dedicated to serving as a productive presence and committed member of the Council of the International Maritime Organisation.

We have presented our candidature for re-election to Category “C” in the elections in 2019.

The Bahamas intends to continue its work to make positive and innovative contributions toward ensuring the safety and security of shipping, and the prevention of marine pollution by maritime vessels.

The Bahamas remains committed to the protection and promotion of human rights and to gender equality.

The geographical location of The Bahamas has made us particularly vulnerable to illegal migration.

We have been embattled by this for decades.

We are resolute, however, to fight illegal migration and to do so in a manner that prioritises the safety and security of The Bahamas, while adhering to human rights principles.

The Bahamas is committed to the use of information communication technology to support development.

We have offered ourselves as the Smart Choice with our candidature for the Council

of the International Telecommunication Union.

The Bahamas has been endorsed by CARICOM.

Madam President,

The world continues to make progress in myriad areas of economic, political and social development.

But progress requires the eternal vigilance of every generation and a recommitment to upholding the dignity and equality of all people, and unrelenting international cooperation.

I wish to reaffirm the commitment of The Bahamas to the principles enshrined in the Charter of this great organization.

I thank you Madam President on behalf of the people of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.
