



*The  
Bahamas*

**Statement**

**by**

**The Honourable T. Brent Symonette, M.P.  
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and  
Immigration**

**at the**

**Sixty-fifth 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 election to the Presidency of this sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I also extend sincere gratitude to your predecessor, Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki for his stewardship of this Assembly during the sixty-fourth session.

I also take this opportunity to express condolences on behalf of my Government to the Government and People of Pakistan for the loss of lives and property sustained as a result of the devastating floods affecting their region. The Government and people of The Bahamas stand in solidarity with Pakistan.

Mr. President,

One of the greatest casualties of the global economic and financial crisis has been the loss in speed toward achieving the development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We are encouraged by the decline in the number of people living in absolute poverty, and the reported increased access to primary and secondary education for some. We are mindful that high-levels of infant and child mortality; unsatisfactory reduction in the rate of maternal mortality; continued high incidences of sexual violence against women and a rise in the prevalence of HIV continue to persist in too many countries.

The World Health Organization forecasts that between 2006 and 2015, deaths from non-communicable diseases will increase worldwide by 17 per cent. The increasing risks and high prevalence of non-communicable diseases are exacting heavy tolls on finances and health systems of countries like The Bahamas. Hence we welcome the adoption of resolution 64/265 which calls for a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly next September to address the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

Mr. President,

The Bahamas continues to place the highest priority on attaining and surpassing the MDGs. We fully expect to achieve most if not all of the goals and targets identified. Still, we are not out of the woods. The fallout from the global economic and financial crises continues to impact the chief engine and principal employer in our economy – tourism – and to slow recovery and expansion in other segments of the economy.

My Government has accelerated the implementation of a planned programme of national infrastructure upgrade and expansion with a view to upgrading the country's infrastructure to accommodate new growth and development when the global economy rebounds.

We believe it is critical that greater attention is given to achieving a more transparent international credit rating system that takes fully into account the needs and concerns of developing countries.

Greater participation by developing countries is also required in key international norm and standard-setting bodies in financial regulation and supervision, including the Financial Stability Board and Basel Committee on Banking Supervision. It is our view that there is an important role for the United Nations in this process, particularly in the area of institutional strengthening.

We are also pleased by the considerable progress made in enhancing our social safety net, expanding unemployment benefits and introducing a national prescription drugs programme meant to ensure that the most vulnerable sectors of our society – infants and school aged children, and the elderly – receive prescription medication regardless of their ability to pay.

And we are pleased that, notwithstanding forced reductions in government expenditure across the board, every child in The Bahamas continues to be assured of a place in government-operated schools from primary to high school.

Overshadowing our successes is the ever present threat posed by climate change. The Bahamas is the fifth most vulnerable country to sea level rise. We are a country of negligible greenhouse gas emissions, still we will suffer catastrophic results if emissions are not stabilized and reduced worldwide. Indeed, science demonstrates that a temperature rise of two degrees Celsius will result in sea level rise of two meters. Such an occurrence will submerge eighty per cent of our territory.

The Bahamas joins with other small island developing States (SIDS) in reiterating the call to the international community, and particularly to the developed countries, to undertake urgent, ambitious and decisive action to significantly reduce emissions of all greenhouse gases, including fast action strategies. We similarly call for increased financial and technological support of SIDS, and other particularly vulnerable countries, as we struggle to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change.

We look forward with considerable anticipation to the December Conference in Cancun.

Mr. President,

The Bahamas again draws attention to the importance of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States as this programme remains the blue print for action on sustainable development by SIDS which was subsequently reaffirmed in the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation.

In The Bahamas we have an unwavering political commitment to sustainable development principles in national development strategies. And in the area of biodiversity, significant achievements have been made in establishing and expanding

marine, coastal and terrestrial protected areas. The development of a national energy policy, with heavy focus on the potential of renewable energy, is well underway.

Mr. President,

It is impossible for my country to take note of the high incidence of catastrophic natural disasters being experienced around the world and not acknowledge the plight of our near neighbour Haiti. Haiti and its People are of priority concern to The Bahamas and to the CARICOM sub-region, as it is for the entire international community.

None of us was ever under any illusion that the recovery and reconstruction of Haiti, in the wake of the devastating January earthquake, would be anything less than a Herculean task. In the immediate aftermath of that catastrophe, billions of dollars were pledged and the wider community of nations vowed to stay the course and work to ensure that Haiti gained a footing on the path to sustainable growth and development.

There has been some progress in Haiti over the past nine and a half months - but not nearly enough. Millions of internally displaced persons continue to languish in makeshift tent cities with inadequate shelter or protection and most of the rubble remains exactly where it fell on the 12<sup>th</sup> January.

It is imperative that the United Nations continue in its pivotal role of mobilizing international assistance for Haiti and assisting with the recovery and reconstruction.

Mr. President,

International peace and security remains a concern to us all. The recently held second review of the United Nations Global Counter-terrorism Strategy underscored that we must renew our efforts to combat terrorism in an effective and integrated manner. I reiterate my Government's commitment to full implementation of the Strategy and renew the call for completion of negotiations on a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

The Bahamas is a full partner in the international fight to combat terrorism and other transnational criminal activities. The Bahamas currently serves as Chair of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism. We were pleased to host this past June a sub-regional workshop on counter-terrorism financing organized by the Organization of American States in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Mr. President,

The Security Council is central to international efforts meant to foster peace and improve security around the globe. We believe that the Council's efforts in this regard would be strengthened if its composition better reflected the geopolitical realities of the world. Toward this end The Bahamas lends its voice to the call for increased urgency in efforts

to make the Security Council more representative, accountable, democratic and transparent.

Crime and threats to security continue to occupy the minds of the People of The Bahamas and indeed of the Caribbean sub-region. The international traffic in illicit drugs and the related illicit trade in small arms and light weapons have for many years disrupted the lives of peace-loving citizens of the Caribbean. Governments like my own have been required to dedicate increased portions of our annual budgets to the fight against crime. The seemingly unlimited resources of the illegal cartels continue to render our efforts insufficient.

Hence, we look with anticipation to the 2012 Conference whose objective is the conclusion of an Arms Trade Treaty. We fully endorse in this regard calls from fellow Caricom States for the Treaty to be comprehensive in scope with provisions for all categories of weapons.

My Government also reaffirms its commitment to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We were pleased that the outcome document of the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States was adopted by consensus this past June.

I record the appreciation of my Government for the technical assistance recently received from the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-LiREC) in the area of firearms destruction and stockpile management. We look forward to further assistance in the future.

Mr. President,

The Bahamas applauds the General Assembly's proclamation of the year commencing 12 August, 2010 as the International Year of Youth under the theme 'Dialogue and Mutual Understanding'.

We believe that the overwhelming majority of our young people are creative and law abiding. They will doubtlessly become credits to their communities and to our country. Regrettably, a significant minority of youth, not unlike troubled youth around the world, find it difficult to overcome challenges presented by poverty, weak educational achievement, risky social behaviours including drug and alcohol abuse, criminal activity and rising unemployment.

A recent report of the ILO found that young people aged 15 to 24 accounted for over 22 per cent of the increase in the number of unemployed since the beginning of 2007.

My Government is seeking to further expand educational programmes and career-oriented training opportunities for our youth by enhancing our secondary school curriculum and by strengthening programmes available at The Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute.

The Bahamas welcome efforts by this Organization to continue to bring focus to women's issues. We applaud in this regard, the adoption of resolution 64/289 which approved the establishment of a new gender entity – “UN Women”.

We also applaud the adoption and recent launch of the United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons. Human trafficking is a growing phenomenon in our Region. It is increasingly a challenge for The Bahamas, an archipelagic nation with porous borders. My Government is committed to combating this activity and to intercepting and prosecuting those engaged in such activity to the fullest extent of the law.

Building on its ratification in 2008 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, The Bahamas has also enacted a Child Protection and Trafficking in Persons Legislation. Specialized training in counter-trafficking has been made available to representatives of relevant Government Agencies and key stakeholders

Mr. President,

The Bahamas believes that the United Nations is working diligently to meet its mandate to facilitate increased international dialogue toward realizing the noble goals as set out in its Charter.

The Bahamas has taken note of the Secretary-General's announcement of a High-level Panel on Global Sustainability as a blueprint for a livable, prosperous and sustainable future for all. My delegation fully endorses the Secretary-General in his assertion that “the time for narrow agenda and narrow thinking is over”. As an organization, we must continue to chart a course that would enable us to meet unprecedented global challenges and to translate our efforts into actions for the benefit of all. The rhetoric must become reality. We **all** have a contribution to make in realizing the goals and objectives of the United Nations, based on the principles outlined in the Charter.

I thank you, Mr. President.