



*The*  
*Bahamas*

**STATEMENT  
BY**

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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE  
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS**

**AT THE  
FIFTY- SEVENTH SESSION  
OF  
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**UNITED NATIONS  
NEW YORK**

**SEPTEMBER 15, 2002**

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Mr. President

1. On behalf of Prime Minister Perry G. Christie, the Government and people of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, I congratulate you most warmly on your election to the Presidency of this the 57th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Bahamas is confident that the session will be steered to a fruitful conclusion under your able guidance. You and the other members of your equally competent Bureau may be assured of The Bahamas' full support in the performance of your duties. I take this opportunity also to congratulate your predecessor, Dr. Han Seung-soo of the Republic of Korea for his skillful leadership during the 56<sup>th</sup> Session which undoubtedly was one of the most challenging sessions of the United Nations.

Mr. President

2. The right to self-determination and the full, fair and unhindered expression of the will of the people are principles held in the highest esteem by The Bahamas. The Bahamas looks forward to welcoming the Democratic Republic of East Timor to the United Nations when it takes its place in this Assembly in just a few weeks. The Bahamas is pleased to welcome Switzerland to this family of nations.

Mr. President,

3. The world has agreed that the United Nations is a place where nations, large and small, are equal, where disputes of an international character may be resolved peacefully, and where the use of force is supported only in accordance with the United Nations Charter. The Bahamas and all nations represented here, have signed on to this contract, a contract that, in our view, is inviolate and must be honoured. This should not be a matter of convenience and in our view applies to all nations, large and small. Today, I reaffirm The Bahamas' commitment to the United Nations Charter, and to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Government and people of The Bahamas believe in, and will continue to support the United Nations and to uphold the founding principles on which its effectiveness and success depends.

4. We reaffirm our commitment to the rule of law, and an abiding respect for the right to self-determination, the sovereignty of nations, and the right of people everywhere to expect that their Government, freely and democratically elected, will protect their rights. We urge world leaders to accept that the freely expressed will of the people is their sole claim to legitimacy and that the will of the people should not be subverted by any means. We reject parochialism as a justification for obfuscating the true intent and will of a people as expressed through the ballot box.

Mr. President,

5. The Government of The Bahamas believes in good governance at all levels, as a fundamental human right. As an adjunct to that right, we have committed ourselves to

deepening our longstanding democratic tradition. General Elections are not the end of the story. The citizen must continue to have a role in the governance of the country. Civil society must be actively encouraged to develop and engage in the affairs of the country. The Bahamas is committed to consulting its people on all matters of national importance. This becomes critical as our country examines its role and fulfills its obligations to other member states on a bilateral and a multilateral level.

Mr. President,

6. The first anniversary of the 11 September attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon near Washington, DC and the tragedy in Pennsylvania was commemorated just a few days ago. On that occasion, The Bahamas reiterated its condemnation of these heinous acts, as attacks on our values and on our civilization. Such acts must not go unpunished – We therefore, support measures to bring the guilty to justice, and to combat terrorism and all its forms and manifestations. We are resolute in our views on this. We pause to remember the families and friends in countries around the world who lost loved ones in those attacks.

7. In our own country, we are seeking to recover from the knock-on effects of the unemployment the attacks caused. We are taking steps to rebuild our economy. We have initiated changes to our domestic law and have in the United Nations, the Commonwealth and the Organization of American States, we have become parties to international conventions to bolster our capacity to play our necessary role in the fight against these attacks on our way of life. We will continue to give our full support to international efforts to eliminate this scourge. At the same time, we are keen to ensure that in this fight the fundamental rights and freedoms of our citizens are not eroded.

Mr. President,

8. The Bahamas believes that there is no better legacy that we can leave to the generations to come than an earth that is safe, secure and that can sustain life. We firmly believe that there can be development without harm to the environment, a point we emphasised at the recently concluded World Summit for Sustainable Development. The environment is not only the biological medium that supports the life of the people of The Bahamas, but it is also the central reason for our economic success and our accomplishment, of which we are indeed proud. My Government has therefore, given high priority and has taken practical steps, to preserve and protect the environment.

9. We reiterate our concern expressed at the Summit, about the threat posed to small island developing states by all manifestations of climate change including the rise in sea levels. We have repeatedly expressed our grave concern to some of our industrialised partners about the transshipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean and the disastrous effect this might have on the economies of The Bahamas and the Caribbean. Tourism is our primary industry, and an accident involving spent nuclear fuel will almost certainly destroy it. We do not accept that because the risk of accidents is

remote that the transshipment of nuclear waste should be allowed to continue. We make the assertion today and ask for the transshipment to cease.

10. The Bahamas joins in urging the early ratification and implementation of the Kyoto Protocol and in reaffirming commitment to sustainable development, and to the Political Declaration and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Mr. President,

11. The international community faces a broad range of political, economic, social and cultural issues. We have made inroads, Mr. President, but not sufficient to stem the spiral of persistence of poverty, hunger, human rights abuses, crime and diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS and to address the vulnerability of small island developing states. The Bahamas is particularly concerned about HIV/AIDS and the slow progress in fighting the disease.

Mr. President,

12. The critical question on HIV/AIDS and all the other issues is where do we go from here? This body has made important commitments to the world. There are reviews, platforms and programmes of action. Our respective publics may be forgiven for their cynicism and the criticism levelled that the United Nations is a talking shop. Our view is that it is better to talk than fight. Talking is in fact, a form of action, and there is no doubt that with regard to HIV/AIDS discussion of the problem is central to the solutions. But our respective publics are looking for and require more immediate money and direct action. We must not be accused of inaction in the face of human suffering and adversity.

13. We in The Bahamas have ably demonstrated our determination to play our part in these endeavours. We have been credited, regionally and internationally for our model programmes, particularly in respect to our treatment of, and efforts to control the spread of HIV/AIDS. We especially wish to thank the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization, now celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> year, for the cooperation they have extended to The Bahamas and for their stellar work in the area of international health. We wish to commend the recent initiative to provide antiretroviral drugs to countries of the Caribbean to assist in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Mr. President,

14. The Bahamas is concerned about the present global economic order. We raise questions about whether globalisation and trade liberalisation can, indeed, function as a vehicle for progressive change in all countries large and small, developed and developing. We are committed to adapting to change but at a pace and in a manner and form that is consistent with the way we live. The Caribbean Community of which the Bahamas is a part, has taken up the challenges of ensuring a degree of stability among

its member countries in the face of globalization. But The Bahamas believes that more can and must be done to assist our Caribbean Community to adapt to these externally imposed changes, through equitable and sensitive trade policies and by reform of the international financial institutions and their lending practices.

Mr. President,

15. The Bahamas is the unwitting transit point for illegal activities; the smuggling of human beings and the illicit trade in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The United States is the ultimate target. We are also suffering from increased violent crime from guns smuggled into our country from the United States. These guns are terrorizing our society. The Bahamas is working closely with the United States and other neighbouring countries to address these issues. There must be a stronger effective action to reduce demand for drugs in the receiving country. There must be more effective action taken to stop the flow of illegal guns.

Mr. President,

16. The Bahamas has taken an active interest in the peace and stability of its sister Caricom state, Haiti. Given our longstanding and developing relations with Haiti, positive steps taken to provide assistance and support for Haiti give us great hope. We are especially pleased with the efforts of the Inter-American Development Bank to work with the Government of Haiti to remove the existing financial hurdles that impede development efforts. We also welcome the recent OAS resolution and the announcement by the United States that it would contribute additional resources to the OAS Special Mission in Haiti. Illegal migration from Haiti causes a serious drain on the resources of The Bahamas. In addition to Haitian-Bahamian bilateral efforts to address this problem, The Bahamas believes that targeted international initiatives, with the cooperation of the Government of Haiti, represent the best hope for the Haitian people.

17. Illegal immigration from Cuba also adversely affects us. The Bahamas continues to call for the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States of America. We believe that such normalization would be central to solving that dimension of the migration problem.

Mr. President,

18. The Bahamas welcomes the entry into force of the Rome Statute on 1 July 2002, and the establishment of the International Criminal Court as a critical tool in the fight against violations of humanitarian international law and crimes against humanity.

Mr. President,

20. The conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people is a matter of concern. There should be peace between them. We support the peaceful settlement of this issue

in accordance with all applicable United Nations resolutions. Every people deserve to have a state to call their own in peace and security.

21. The Bahamas is concerned about developments in Africa. As part of the African Diaspora, we wish to see Africa prosper, wars cease and equitable policies applied for all of the many and varied people of that continent.

Mr. President,

22. We support the reform of the Security Council. The Bahamas believes that the time has come for us to take the hard decisions and agree to a practical programme of reform, that take fully into account the need for equitable membership and for a more democratic and transparent Council.

Mr. President,

23. The Bahamas is a small country, whose voice, without the indispensable forum provided by the United Nations would otherwise be lost, or at best ignored. Here, irrespective of size and wealth, we have the ability to speak with equal voice and vote with equal power on matters that affect the quality of our lives today, and that will impact the type of world that we leave in place for future generations. This is why it is vitally important that we preserve and respect the integrity of this organization. Member states are bound to come here for redress and should not act unilaterally outside the bounds of the charter. The Bahamas reaffirms its commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations as enshrined in its charter. I leave you with that commitment here today.

I thank you Mr. President.