



*The
Bahamas*

STATEMENT
BY

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THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS

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Mr. President,

It is my honour to congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of this, the 60th session of the United Nations General Assembly. I also wish to pay tribute to the tireless efforts of your predecessor, H.E. Jean Ping, for the manner in which he guided the work of the 59th session.

Mr. President,

I wish to extend the condolences of the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas Perry Christie, Government and people of The Bahamas to the Government and people of the United States in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina last month. This is a scene with which the people of The Bahamas are regrettably all too familiar, and we continue to offer our assistance and support in any way possible.

Mr. President,

The high-level plenary meeting held last week, at which so many Heads of State and Government were represented, served as a timely and much needed reminder of the need for us all to recommit ourselves to the purposes and principles of this organization. At a time when some have begun to question the purpose of this organization, The Bahamas reaffirms that the United Nations remains the best chance for all States, large and small, to achieve peace, security and sustainable development for our peoples.

One of the leaders who spoke to us last week was the Most Honourable P.J. Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica. On April of 2006, Mr. Patterson demits office after more than a decade in the service of his people and the Caribbean region as Prime Minister and a generation as a Parliamentarian and Government Minister. His statement last week was perhaps his final statement to this assembly as Prime Minister. The Bahamas, and the region joins us I am sure, salutes Mr. Patterson as he retires from active public life.

Mr. Patterson's example in Jamaica is one that we know well enough in our Caribbean region. It is the example of democratic governance and the traditions of regular elections, and accountability to the publics whom we serve. The history of democracy in our region has also produced for the region an enviable standard of living in many ways. This way of life that has been described by the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Ralph Gonsalves as the Caribbean civilization is one which did not develop without significant investments in our people, and cannot be sustained unless that investment continues.

The region is neither poor nor rich. It falls in between, having accomplished most if not all of the Millennium Development Goals. But as we watch the development of globalization, there is a tendency to forget that this region of a relatively few people, and small nations, requires the continued support of the developed world. No where is this more evident than the decisions taken on sugar and bananas. There is a

symbiotic relationship between the region and the developed world, with many of our people leaving the region to help to sustain the way of life of the developed world. There is a major transformation right now in the economies across the region.

Our view is that greater attention must therefore be paid to this region in transition from our developed partners, looking toward investment particularly in education, support of the delivery of health care, and in the continued support of democratic governance. It is not charity that is required but a sound, sensible investment in our common futures.

Haiti is our poorest member and is perhaps the example from which it is best to draw. We thank Brazil and the many sister countries of Latin America who have risen to the challenge with men and materiel. But while much has been given, there are many pledges of donor aid, which have not materialized as they should. It is a complaint from throughout the developing world of donors who make pledges of financial and material support but do not follow through on those pledges. Haiti today is paying the price in the real way for charting the way toward freedom in this hemisphere when in 1804 it struck a blow for the freedom of Africans in the west. Today, we repeat what the American Christian Bishop T.D. Jakes said in the National Cathedral in Washington last week while praying for the victims of hurricane Katrina: it is what we do that counts, not what we say we will do.

Haiti is of major interest to us because in the circumstances of their economy and their national politics, The Bahamas faces increased pressure from illegal migration from Haiti and the region from the threat of instability. It is incumbent upon all of us in the United Nations to do all that we can to help resolve the issues there.

Mr. President,

It is also important that we do not overlook issues of global governance and institutional reform. It would be nearly impossible, for small States in particular, to sustain any meaningful gains from the process of globalization without a voice and participation in international decision making and norm setting bodies. It is for this reason that The Bahamas is encouraged by the discussions held during the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development held earlier this year, which confirmed that there is a place for the UN in all aspects of global standard setting and assessment. The Dialogue clearly demonstrated that there is a need to address the "democratic deficit" in many of the international economic, financial and trade institutions. At this podium last year, The Bahamas called for the convening of a global forum to address the unfairness of unelected bodies imposing mandates that are unfounded upon developing economies like ours in the region, and without our countries having an opportunity to be heard and to influence the result. We make the call once again for that forum, and pledge that The Bahamas will continue to work toward levelling the playing field, particularly in the financial services sector.

Mr. President,

The images of the destruction in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina are all too familiar to many Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The images have been

sobering, as we realize that even the biggest and strongest of us will grapple with the difficulties associated with the recovery from such a destructive force of nature. Last year in this place, we said that the native peoples of our region were so familiar with the violent storms that plague the region in the summer months that they gave it the name hurricane. Today, we have seen those storms hit with a savagery unknown in recent times. It leads us to question whether this is cyclical or whether climate change now confronts us. In either case, it places front and centre the need for public policy on sustainable development, and the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Small Island Developing States.

The Bahamas with much of its land barely five feet above mean sea level would wish to highlight the need to undertake global action to address the dangers of climate change. With the warming of the Earth's surfaces and oceans, we have seen an increase in the incidence of natural disasters, many of them causing untold damage and loss. We have an opportunity however to address the adverse effects of climate change. We have a chance to make a statement here during this session that we will not neglect our common but differentiated responsibility to protect our environment, and to send this message to Montreal where in November this year the Kyoto Protocol can finally begin to take on a more substantial form.

Mr. President,

For countries such as The Bahamas, the threat of devastation as a result of natural disasters is also exacerbated by man-made hazards. We once again reiterate our grave concern over the serious threat posed to the security and economic development of Caribbean countries by the transshipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea, and continue to call on States involved in such transshipments to desist from this practice. In this context, I wish also to highlight the continuing efforts of the Caribbean region to designate the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the context of sustainable development.

Mr. President,

The achievement of sustainable development will require healthy, productive populations who are able both to contribute to and benefit from social and economic progress. The unrelenting spread of HIV/AIDS continues to threaten this progress, in all countries, but particularly in the hardest hit developing countries. The Bahamas is a leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean region, and has been recognized at the international level for the progress made in turning the tide against this disease in our country. We pay tribute today to Dr. Perry Gomez our lead physician in the fight against HIV/AIDS and to all the other caregivers around the world. We welcome this body's reaffirmation at the highest levels of the fight against the disease. In this context, The Bahamas looks forward to the high-level five-year review of the progress made in implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, to take place in June 2006. At that time we must undertake an honest appraisal as to what we have achieved, and where we are falling short, and we must determine the way forward to achieve full implementation of the Declaration of Commitment.

In addition, The Bahamas has seen useful ideas advanced by the United States of America, the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization, to prevent an avian flu pandemic. We use this opportunity to alert the world that we must fight to stop such an eventuality, and pledge our support in doing so.

Mr. President,

By virtue of its geographical location, The Bahamas is an unwitting transit point for illegal drugs from producing countries to the south of our borders to consumer nations to the north of our borders. We have consistently pointed out that The Bahamas neither produces these substances, nor is it the ultimate destination for them. That does not stop those who consume the drugs from blaming countries like ours for this scourge. It is most unfair. It is clear that consuming nations must increase their efforts to reduce demand within their borders. We continue to cooperate with the United States and other countries in this international fight. Our successful efforts and those of the broader region have been acknowledged by our international partners in the fight. It is a fight we are pledged to continue.

The Bahamas, as with other transit countries, experiences the illegal activities associated with this trade and the negative social impacts. This deadly nexus between illicit drugs and small arms and light weapons and other criminal activities undermines the economic and social fabric of our nation. We therefore welcome the conclusion in June of this year of the work of the open-ended working group on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons. The Bahamas, along with many other countries, would have strongly preferred to reach agreement on legally-binding commitments on the marking and tracing of these weapons, we nonetheless hope that this tool will provide some of the necessary political will and momentum to make real progress in halting the illicit accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons. We also look forward to adopting concrete commitments in the near future to regulate the activities of brokers of small arms and light weapons. The Bahamas also continues to call on developed countries to take the same extraordinary measures they use in seeking to stop drug trafficking into their countries, to stop illegal arms from reaching our shores from their countries.

Mr. President,

The Bahamas is pleased to note the adoption of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism by the General Assembly on 13 April 2005. We hope to be in a position to sign the Convention in the near future. We are resolute in the fight against the attacks on innocent people going about their daily lives by those in the pursuit of dubious and nefarious political ends. The vicious attacks in London and Sharm El-Sheikh this year demonstrate clearly the urgency of our task.

However, we must also remember that the fight against those who would attack our common civilization can never be used as an excuse to curtail the rights and freedoms of our citizens, and we must ensure that all counter measures must conform to both the letter and spirit of international human rights law. If we lose our common humanity in the process then the other side wins. We must also ensure

that a spirit of cooperation and assistance permeates our international cooperation efforts on this issue, as we unite to fight a common enemy.

Mr. President,

Over the last year, various issues related to management of UN programmes and funds have been highlighted in the world media. Our Organisation has been plagued by allegations of corruption and abuse. Therefore, during the months leading up to the beginning of this session, The Bahamas welcomed the opportunity to engage constructively in consultations in order to ensure a successful outcome on the question of management reform of the Organisation. We reiterate our support of the Secretary General for the bold measures that he had proposed in his report "*In Larger Freedom...*" and we believe that he should be given the necessary level of authority and flexibility required to fulfill his function as our Chief Executive Officer. However, this is not to say that we support those proposals from other quarters that would seek to transfer power from the General Assembly to the Secretary-General in matters such as the re-deployment of resources. The General Assembly is and should remain the principal policy organ of the UN, with absolute powers in the area of priority setting. The Bahamas also looks forward to continuing discussions on the reform of the Security Council, particularly as it relates to the Council's working methods.

Mr. President,

Let me take this opportunity to thank H.E. Kofi Annan for his fine work in leading this United Nations through treacherous seas over the past years. We will shortly celebrate the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations. Looking back over the past 60 years, there is much of which we can justifiably be proud. There are some cases where we must accept that the international community failed to live up to its legal and moral obligations to act for the benefit for people in need. There are some cases where our decisions were dominated by big power pragmatism, doubtful legalisms as opposed to moral certainty and philosophical clarity. As we move forward, let us be sure that we learn from our mistakes as well as our successes. We have engaged in a process of reflection, which has at times been painful. Let us emerge from this stronger, more unified and determined to act to achieve the goals adopted sixty years ago "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". The peoples of our nations demand and deserve nothing less. Now more than ever we need the United Nations.

Thank you.