

**HON. KENRED DORSETT, M.P.,
MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING**

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

***In Commemoration of
EARTH DAY***

INDEPENDENCE PARK

**(DIRECTLY BEHIND THE STUDENT
UNION'S BUILDING AND CAFETERIA)**

COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS

**15TH APRIL, 2014
2:00P.M.**

SALUTATIONS

- Dr. Earla Carey-Baines, Acting President of the College of The Bahamas
- Dr. Eslyn Jones, Vice President of Student Affairs;
- Dr. Dion Hepburn, Chairperson School of Chemistry, Environment and Life Sciences;
- Mr. Lionel Johnson, Dean of Pure and Applied Sciences;
- Lecturers
- COB students;
- Ladies & Gentlemen

GOOD AFTERNOON!

“There is a great need for the introduction of new values in our society, where bigger is not necessarily better, where slower can be faster, and where less can be more.” These words were penned and uttered by the founder of Earth Day, Senator Gaylord Nelson. April 22 is celebrated as Earth Day by some one billion people in 192 countries around the globe. It is a day for inspiration and appreciation of the earth’s natural resources.

Earth day had a very unique start. Senator Gaylord Nelson took President Kennedy on a conservation tour with the view of having environmental matters included in political discussions. His efforts, however, were not successful. With help from schools, local communities, the wire services and the New York Times, a grassroots demonstration was held in the spring of 1970. After that demonstration, it is often said that Earth Day organized itself on 22nd April, 1970. From 1970 onward, the environment began to receive political attention.

The Bahamas Government made a solid commitment to protect and preserve the environment by formulating the Ministry of the Energy & Environment in the year 2005. It recommitted itself to doing so with the establishment of the Ministry of

the Environment in 2008. In 2012, The Government showed the need to progress in tandem with 21st century thinking to promote the principles of Blue and Green Economies with the establishment of the Ministry of the Environment & Housing.

For the year 2014, the Earth Day Network has selected the theme – “Green Cities.” On hearing this theme for the first time, most people beg the question – “What are Green Cities, and what do they have in them?” The Earth Day Network defines a green city as “a city that has the cleanest, most efficient energy, transportation and building infrastructure possible.”

It possesses –

- energy sources that are renewable and efficiently distributed through reliable micro grids;
- buildings that reduce waste, conserve water and are energy efficient;
- a public transportation system that is accessible and clean;
- infrastructure that promotes walking and biking; and
- an affordable, healthier and pleasant place to live.

Therefore, countries on the planet including The Bahamas are being encouraged to think sustainably, and devise ways to reduce its carbon footprint by the way they –

- construct buildings;
- dispense energy supplies; and
- operate the public transportation system.

At the Greenbuild in 2013, Hillary Clinton expressed, “There is no doubt any longer that green buildings are some of the best investments we can make.” Mrs. Clinton was led to this conclusion after realizing that one third of the world’s green house gas emissions originated with buildings, and that 40% of carbon dioxide emissions in the United States alone come from residential and commercial buildings. Since most buildings are powered by fossil fuels they are considered energy inefficient and are therefore, large contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. It is estimated that energy consumption in buildings can be reduced by some 30 – 50% if it uses –

- renewable energy sources;
- sustainable building materials;

- improve water and energy efficiency; and
- reduce waste and pollution.

Therefore, my Ministry has piloted a new environmentally friendly construction system and housing designs that will ensure home in The Bahamas are energy efficient. Additionally, to create more green spaces in The Bahamas a Bill for An Act to Create The Bahamas Public Parks and Public Beaches Authority has been tabled in the House of Assembly. To ensure we are reducing our carbon footprint through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, my Ministry has also spearheaded the amendments to the Forestry Act of 2010. These amendments cause land to be vested in the Minister to declare the National Forest Estate as –

- forest reserves;
- protected forests; and
- conservation forests.

In our efforts to construct new homes that promote green cities, my Ministry commenced the removal of shanty towns from the landscape of the country. Just on Thursday, 10th April, 2014, Shanty towns near Pride Estates III were demolished. This brought the pride back to the residents in Pride Estates III. Such actions also assist us to preserve the beauty of our islands, which entice millions of eager visitors to our shores who yearn for a clean and healthy environment to explore and have a restful vacation.

To control and reduce the waste that originate from our residential homes, my Ministry introduced the New Providence Residential Garbage Collection Schedule and released it to the public. Further, the Ministry also renegotiated the contract price for the collection of residential garbage from \$5 per household under the FNM to \$2.50.

Ladies and Gentlemen, most of the energy generated in The Bahamas, and in fact the world is powered by fossil fuels. Fossils fuels create greenhouse gas emissions and are the great contributors to climate change issues. Today, as it stands, distribution via power lines is seen as unreliable and inefficient. Establishing a sustainable future for the Bahamas means we need to upgrade

the electricity grid and replace our dependency on fossil fuels. This compels The Bahamas to move toward completely utilizing renewable energy sources like solar and wind energy that will increase our energy security, regulate energy flow, help us to diagnose issues more quickly and ensure energy efficiency.

Your Government has the political will to make this change. To date, the Government has commenced an energy reform programme that has a renewable energy target of 30% generating capacity by the year 2030. To achieve this goal, my Ministry has already carried out the following steps:

- advanced a new National Energy Policy for adoption by the Government of The Bahamas;
- signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Clinton Foundation that focuses on renewable energy;
- advanced a Residential Energy Self Generation Programme that supports net billing or metering; and
- abolished customs duties on solar inverters and solar panels.

The Government got an excellent head start in the promotion of renewable energy with the assistance of the Inter-American Bank (IDB) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Two (2) renewable energy pilot projects were devised to collect data on renewable energy technologies. The first project was for the installation of solar water heaters and the second project for the installation of photovoltaic systems in Bahamian homes. The data received from the sixty (60) solar water heaters and the six (6) photovoltaic systems in homes confirms that Bahamians will be able to benefit from the cost savings of these environmentally friendly devices.

To support our efforts nationally, on the international platform we have joined the International Renewable Energy Agency and appointed a co-Chair to the Caribbean Challenge Initiative Council.

Interestingly, the transportation sector contributes some 24% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and is labeled as the fastest growing source for these gases. Since most of the world's population depends on cars as the main means for transport. In The Bahamas we must now focus on acquiring more sustainable transportation technology or hybrid and electrical vehicles that

are fuel efficient and yield low emissions. More efforts will be made to strengthen and expand the existing public transportation system to make it more convenient. We also have to look at how we can design our Bahamian green cities so that it is catering to persons who would like to walk and use their bicycles.

In connection with these goals, my Ministry has been engaged in advanced discussion and consultations on the Environmental Health (Vehicles Emission) regulations which will reduce the “black smoke” you see daily from the ill-maintained cars and buses presently on our streets. My Ministry has also amended the Derelict Motor Vehicles (Disposal) Act to empower the Director the Department of Environmental Health Services to remove vehicles that pose a hazard to public health and safety. The amendments also increase fines for those in contravention of the Act.

For years now students have always been a driving force in environmental change. Today, is no exception. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the administrators and students for your fine efforts to organize an Earth Day activity with real meaning. I look forward later this afternoon to

viewing the Earth Day Exhibits and vendors on display in Independence Park. I brought my own cup and container to experience the new ways you will show me how to eat and live.

Back in 2010, Earth Day Network launched A Billion Acts of Green® Campaign that was an effort to collect one billion individual acts of environmental service. The goal was achieved in 2012. With your efforts to plant trees today, The Bahamas is now contributing to the goal of Two Billion Acts of Green that is presently being pursued. As Thomas Fuller once said, “He that plants trees loves others beside himself.” We can truly say that you have the welfare of your community and country at heart.

On 22nd April, the Ministry of the Environment and Housing will also celebrate Earth Day. Soon we will be joined by the Bahamas National Trust. They will be removing invasive species of Cattails and Casuarinas from the Harold and Wilson Ponds. The Cat Island Committee will be hosting an Earth Day Fair. The One Eleuthera Foundation will also be participating. Joining up with one of their partner organizations, they will launch a recycling program for glass, aluminum cans, plastic and trees for mulching.

For future Earth Day Events you may wish to consider –

- organizing campus awareness programmes;
- start a trend by riding bikes;
- set up a compost system in one of your dining places on campus;
- host a farmers market to promote local farmers;
- plant a campus garden;
- set up recycling centers and establish a programme on campus;
- get involved in the community by organizing a community trash pick-up;
- host panel discussion on the environment; and
- get involved by organizing a competition by sections to help reduce waste or electricity use.

We each can make a difference.

One morning a man was walking down a beach covered with dying starfish. The tide the night before was very strong and thousands of starfish were washed up on the shore, too far up for them to make it back into the water by

themselves. The man shook his head as he thought it was a shame that all of those starfish would die on the beach.

He came upon a boy who was throwing starfish back into the ocean as fast as he could. He was out of breath and it was obvious that he had been doing this for a while. "Son," the man said, "you might as well quit. There are thousands of them. They are washed up all over the beach as far as you can see. There is no way you can make any sort of a difference."

The boy did not even pause in what he was doing. He kept bending and throwing, but as he did, he spoke to the man, "I can make a difference to this one, and this one, and this one." The man thought, and he knew the boy was right. He began to help return the animals to their home, smiling at how life's biggest lessons sometimes came from the smallest people."

So as you view the environmental exhibits, remember this story and make a note of at least one act you can do to help the environmental issue featured. Administrator, students, ladies and gentlemen, no matter who we are or where we come from by doing **one act** to protect our environment and keep it clean, we can make a difference in The Bahamas. **Happy Earth Day!**