

OPENING REMARKS

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MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING

*The GEF Small Grants Program
Grant Writing Capacity Development Workshop
for Local Civil Society Organizations*

DATE: 16TH SEPTEMBER, 2013

VENUE: COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS

TIME: AT 9:00 A.M.

SALUTATIONS

- DR. ARUN KASYAP, RESIDENT COORDINATOR,
REPRESENTATIVE, UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
(UNDP)
- MR. MANUEL MESSINA, RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE
INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE
(IICA), BAHAMAS OFFICE
- DR. BETSY BOZE, PRESIDENT, THE COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS &
MODERATOR FOR THIS MORNING'S SESSION
- MR. WILLIAM FIELDING, CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL STEERING
COMMITTEE
- MR. PHILIP WEECH, DIRECTOR, BEST COMMISSION & FOCAL POINT
FOR THE BAHAMAS
- MR. D. ALEXANDER STEWART, NATIONAL COORDINATOR

- WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS
- LADIES & GENTLEMEN

GOOD MORNING

IT IS INDEED A GREAT PLEASURE AND HONOR FOR ME TO BE HERE ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM GRANT WRITING CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP. LET ME EXPRESS MY SINCERE THANKS TO THE SPONSORS OF THIS WORKSHOP, AND TO THE ORGANIZERS FOR INVITING ME, ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS, TO DELIVER A FEW REMARKS ON THIS AUSPICIOUS OCCASION.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF) SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM WAS ESTABLISHED 20 YEARS AGO AND IMPLEMENTED WORLDWIDE THROUGH THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (UNDP). JUST OVER FOUR YEARS AGO, THE GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE BAHAMAS AND HAS SINCE PROVIDED GRANT SUPPORT TO LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOS), INCLUSIVE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS) AND COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS (CBOS) IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS, THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND OTHER LOCAL COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS.

OUR HOME AND ITS PEOPLE ARE, "INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO OUR ENVIRONMENT, OUR SHALLOW BLUE SEAS AND OUR WAY OF LIFE. THE ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINS OUR LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS AND IS THE VERY FOUNDATION OF OUR ECONOMIC ACTIVITY".

THEREFORE, PROTECTING AND SUSTAINING OUR ENVIRONMENT MUST BEGIN AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL; AND PROGRAMMES LIKE THIS ONE ALLOW US TO DO JUST THAT.

THE GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM PROVIDES GRANTS TO SMALL COMMUNITIES IN ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS SUCH AS BIODIVERSITY, CLIMATE CHANGE, LAND DEGRADATION, CHEMICALS, INTERNATIONAL WATERS AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT. WE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING ARE PLEASED THAT THIS WORKSHOP IS TAKING PLACE AT THIS TIME BECAUSE IT WILL ADDRESS SOME OF THE CHALLENGES WE FACE IN PROTECTING AND PRESERVING OUR ENVIRONMENT.

THE BAHAMAS IS CURRENTLY A PARTY TO EACH OF THE MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENT AGREEMENTS (MEAS) WHICH UNDERTAKE WORK AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL IN THE THEMATIC AREAS I

ALREADY MENTIONED. AS A RESULT, THE GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM WORKS AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL TO ASSIST THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS IN MEETING ITS OBLIGATIONS UNDER EACH OF THE MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS.

IN ADDITION TO THE COUNTRY ALLOCATION OF APPROXIMATELY \$8 MILLION FROM THE GEF, THE GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM HAS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING ONE MILLION DOLLARS IN GRANTS THROUGH THE YEAR 2014. THESE FUNDS WILL BE ALLOCATED TO DIRECTLY BENEFIT LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITIES NEEDING ASSISTANCE IN BIODIVERSITY, CLIMATE CHANGE, LAND DEGRADATION, CHEMICALS, INTERNATIONAL WATERS AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT.

UNDER THE AREA OF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT, THE GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME IS PARTNERING WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS, OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (SUCH AS IICA, THE OAS, THE IDB), AND THE COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS TO DELIVER KEY TRAINING THAT WILL MEET THE NEEDS OF LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE AREA OF GRANT WRITING AND ACCESSING GRANT FUNDING. THE SUPPORT OF OUR LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IS OF THE HIGHEST IMPORTANCE TO THE GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS REMAINS COMMITTED TO MAKE THIS ENDEAVOR A PRIORITY.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THIS YEAR ALONE THE GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM HAS PROVIDED, THROUGH ITS GRANT TO THE BAHAMAS REEF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION (BREEF), SUPPORT FOR

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECO-SCHOOLS HERE IN NASSAU AND THE FAMILY ISLANDS. OTHER GRANTS HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST (BNT) TO ASSIST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BONE FISH POND NATIONAL PARK AND THE MORIAH HARBOUR CAY NATIONAL PARK, EXUMA. GRANTS HAVE AIDED IN THE REMOVAL OF INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES AND THE RESTORATION OF MANGROVES WHICH HAD BEEN DESTROYED BY ENCROACHMENT.

LAST YEAR, THE GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM SUPPORTED THE LOBSTER FISHERIES COMMUNITIES OF ABACO THROUGH A GRANT TO THE FRIENDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT, ABACO WHICH UNDERTOOK THE “SIZE MATTERS” CAMPAIGN, EDUCATING ALL STAKE HOLDERS ABOUT THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE CATCH OF LOBSTER FISHERIES.

UNDER THE GLOBAL THEME “COMMUNITY ACTION – GLOBAL IMPACT”, THE GEF SMALL GRANT PROGRAM IN THE BAHAMAS HAS GROWN FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH AND CONTINUES TO EXPAND ITS REACH AND SUPPORT BASE WITHIN THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES WHERE SUCH HELP AND ASSISTANCE IS REALLY NEEDED.

I WISH THE PARTICIPANTS A PRODUCTIVE THREE DAYS OF DELIBERATION AND TRUST THAT THE WEALTH OF INFORMATION OBTAINED, AND THE NETWORKS ESTABLISHED WITH FURTHER EQUIP THEM TO ACCESS AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND GRANT FUNDING FOR YOUR ORGANIZATIONS.

THANK YOU.