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MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING
BAHAMAS

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INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY
(IRENA)

ABU DHABI, DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Mr. President, Director General, Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen...Good Morning.

I bring you greetings from the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

I am grateful to the Government of the United Arab Emirates and IRENA for their warm welcome and the hospitality shown to me and my delegation during this meeting.

The Bahamas joined IRENA in 2014. We are currently participating in the launching of the SIDS Lighthouse Partnership. We were also appointed a Co-Chair to the Caribbean Challenge Initiative Council and most recently, will be representing CARICOM on the IRENA council along with Trinidad and Tobago, for the 2015/2016 period.

Since joining IRENA, The Bahamas has appointed a Renewable Energy resource focal point. We are also in the process of establishing a unit solely dedicated to the sustainable exploitation of our natural resources and the deployment of renewable energy technology across our country.

My Government got an excellent head start in the promotion of renewable energy with the assistance of the Inter-American Development Bank and the Global Environment Facility, to conduct two pilot projects that would collect data on the most feasible renewable energy technologies in our market. The first was for the installation of solar water heaters and the second, for the installation of photovoltaic systems in Bahamian homes.

The projects will provide useful evidence for the removal of barriers to the use of RE technologies and guide a new low carbon economy.

Like most in the Caribbean region, The Bahamas' energy dependency has increased in

large portions due to recent global events and the growing energy demand nationwide. Studies have shown that this demand is expected to increase by approximately 30% by 2030. Reducing energy demand and diversifying our energy matrix are fundamental preconditions for limiting our energy dependence. We have identified a number of key areas where action is needed and have made a commitment to have a minimum of 30% RE penetration by 2030.

Last year, my Ministry released The Bahamas National Energy Policy 2013-2033, which outlines the mechanisms through which The Bahamas will achieve a modern, diversified and efficient energy sector, providing Bahamians with affordable energy supplies and long-term energy security towards enhancing international competitiveness and sustainable prosperity by 2033. This is the first national Energy Policy of The Bahamas. I would like to thank the GIZ, the German national company for their support and assistance in developing the Policy.

The Renewable Energy Self Generation program, 2014, is the first program of the policy, which is in the process of implementation. With over 29 generating plants in approximately 26 island locations and over 565 MW of installed capacity, the programme will allow for RE sources to supply up to 10% of peak generating capacity in the first instance.

The Bahamas Electricity Corporation (the government owned utility) has prepared a RE Power Purchase/Interconnection Agreement, that will provide the framework for residential and certain commercial customers with RE generation capabilities in particular wind and solar, to connect to the grid. The net metering framework will begin this year. This week, I led the debate in Parliament to amend our Electricity Act, which will allow for grid connection and incorporate renewables in our energy matrix. The debate will continue while I am here and I am certain it will be approved in Parliament before I leave the UAE.

Last year, the Government approved the construction of an OTEC facility for the BAHAMAR resort development which will be used primarily for temperature regulation. However, the agreement allows for the Government to determine its viability for energy production for the benefit of the country.

The Bahamas is also a participant in the Carbon War Room's Ten Island Challenge. Under that programme, this year we will advance 20 MW of solar utility scale farms on several islands within our archipelago.

Mr. Secretary General, the pending Renewable Energy Readiness Assessment is welcomed as a part of the energy sector reform, we trust this can be advanced this year. The Bahamas, like IRENA, is focused on technology infrastructure and standardization. As we embark on our RE Self Generation regime, the protection of the credibility and integrity associated with the infrastructure used in the RE transition becomes all the more important to The Bahamas. We look forward to the strengthening of our relationship with IRENA and its allies as we aim to develop different RE deployment strategies across our archipelago and advance a sustainable energy future. Having regard to the adverse affects of Climate Change and sea level rise on low lying, island nations like the Bahamas, transitioning to a low carbon economy is not only to create a sustainable energy future, but ultimately about saving lives.

I thank you.

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