



OPENING REMARKS

Hon. Kenred M. A. Dorsett M.P.
Minister of The Environment & Housing

*Third International Conference on Small
Island Developing States (SIDS) National
Assessment Preparation Workshop-
Multi-Stakeholder Consultation*

August 12 2013

Time 9:00 am
Venue Super Club Breezes Cable Beach Nassau.

SALUTATIONS

MR. DAVID CATES, UNDERSECRETARY MOTE&H

MR. PHILIP WEECH, DIRECTOR, AND STAFF OF THE
BEST COMMISSION

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

LADIES & GENTLEMEN

GOOD MORNING

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR HAVING ME THIS
MORNING. I AM ELATED THAT I COULD JOIN YOU TO
SPEAK ON A MATTER OF SUCH INCREDIBLE
IMPORTANCE.

WE ARE APPROACHING A POINT WHERE THE EARTH
ITSELF WILL HAVE TO RELIEVE THE BURDENS BEING
PLACED ON IT AS A CONSEQUENCE OF HUMAN
ACTIVITIES, IF WE DO NOT EFFECTIVELY BEGIN TO LIFT
THESE BURDENS OURSELVES BY SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT. THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT IS NOT NEW. IN MORE RECENT TIMES IT
HAS COME TO ENTAIL DEVELOPMENT THAT MEETS

PRESENT DAY NEEDS WITHOUT COMPROMISING THE ABILITY OF FUTURE GENERATIONS TO MEET THEIR OWN NEEDS. THIS HOWEVER, HAS BEEN PRACTICED FOR GENERATIONS BEFORE US.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHANGES THAT ARE TAKING PLACE AS WE SEEK TO ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT HAS BEEN LINKED BY PRINCE CHARLES IN 2009 TO THE NEOLITHIC REVOLUTION AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AS MAJOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC TURNING POINTS IN HUMAN HISTORY. TO THAT I ADD THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REVOLUTION WHICH HAS ENABLED THE COLLECTION, ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA UPON WHICH RESTS OUR EFFORTS TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE ENVIRONMENT.

THE HISTORY OF SUSTAINABILITY TRACES HUMAN-DOMINATED ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS FROM THE EARLIEST CIVILIZATIONS TO THE PRESENT. THIS HISTORY IS CHARACTERIZED BY THE INCREASED REGIONAL SUCCESS OF A PARTICULAR SOCIETY, FOLLOWED BY CRISES THAT WERE EITHER RESOLVED, PRODUCING SUSTAINABILITY, OR NOT RESOLVED, LEADING TO DECLINE.

WHEN WE CONSIDER THE THREE PILLARS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – THE ECONOMY, THE SOCIETY AND THE ENVIRONMENT, WORDS LIKE VALUABLE, EQUITABLE AND FAIR COME TO MIND. IN OUR CONSIDERATION, IT ALSO BECOMES CLEAR THAT WE CANNOT CONSIDER ONE WITHOUT THE OTHERS.

HERE IN THE BAHAMAS THERE IS A NEED FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH WHICH IN OUR CONTEXT MEANS PHYSICAL INTERACTION WITH THE ENVIRONMENT. THE UNITED NATIONS REPORTS THAT PER CAPITA INCOME IN THE BAHAMAS HAS DECLINED EVERY YEAR SINCE 2007, AND IN FACT, THE OVERALL DECLINE HAS BEEN 13.81% IN JUST FOUR YEARS. OUR OWN DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS REPORTS THAT THE NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS EARNING LESS THAN \$5,000 PER ANNUM HAS INCREASED BY 83% BETWEEN 2007 AND 2011. THE COURSE OF THIS MUST CHANGE AND THIS GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO THE CHANGE PROCESS.

THIS IS A CLEAR AND FULLY RATIONAL GOAL OF THE STATE – TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF OUR CITIZENS

THROUGH EXPANDING THE ECONOMY. IT IS SIMPLY UNACCEPTABLE TO HAVE NEARLY 8000 HOUSEHOLDS IN THE BAHAMAS SURVIVING ON A HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF LESS THAN \$5000 PER ANNUM, AND FOR PEOPLE TO BE LIVING IN DERELICT VEHICLES OR ABANDONED BUILDINGS. WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT CHANGE WILL NOT COME ABOUT SIMPLY BY SPENDING MORE MONEY, WE HAVE EMBARKED ON A MULTIFACETED RESPONSE THAT PLACES CONSISTENT EMPHASIS ON THE CREATION OF SUSTAINABLE JOBS. AS MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING, IT IS A CHALLENGE TO ENSURE THAT ECONOMIC GROWTH IS COMPATIBLE WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, AND THAT OUR ECOSYSTEMS ARE NOT SACRIFICED FOR IMMEDIATE ECONOMIC GAINS. I AM COMMITTED TO DOING JUST THAT.

THE U.N. MILLENNIUM ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT, 'LIVING BEYOND OUR MEANS', CONFIRMED A NEGATIVE TREND. IN FOCUSING ON ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND THEIR BENEFITS FOR PEOPLE, IT CONCLUDED WITH A STARK WARNING: HUMAN ACTIVITY IS PUTTING SUCH A STRAIN ON THE

PLANET'S ECOSYSTEMS THAT WE CAN NO LONGER TAKE FOR GRANTED THEIR ABILITY TO SUSTAIN FUTURE GENERATIONS. THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS CAN AND MUST BE MET. BUT THEY WILL NOT BE MET UNLESS WE IMPROVE ON OUR PAST PERFORMANCES...WE MUST DO MORE, WE MUST DO BETTER AND WE MUST DO IT FASTER THAN EVER BEFORE.

THAT IS WHY WE ARE GATHERED HERE IN THIS ROBUST PROCESS OF NATIONAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2014 SIDS CONFERENCE, WITH TECHNICAL SUPPORT FROM THE U.N. SYSTEM AND PARTNER REGIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS. GIVEN THE CROSS-CUTTING NATURE OF THE ISSUES INVOLVED, THE SUCCESS OF THE PREPARATORY PROCESS AT REGIONAL AND GLOBAL LEVELS, AND THE COMPREHENSIVE OUTCOMES OF THIS CONFERENCE, THIS PROCESS WILL SERVE TO PREPARE THE BAHAMAS FOR OTHER POST-2015 RELATED PROCESSES, INCLUDING THOSE RELATED TO THE CREATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS).

WE ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO EFFECTIVELY EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROTECTION OF OUR ENVIRONMENT AND THE CONSERVATION OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEANS AND UNDEVELOPED LAND AND SEEK TO REDUCE OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOSSIL FUELS BY ENCOURAGING THE USE OF ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES. THERE NEEDS TO BE CREATED A FRAMEWORK THAT WILL ENABLE COUNTRIES LIKE THE BAHAMAS TO SET A GLOBAL AGENDA THAT ENABLES COLLECTIVE INTERNATIONAL ACTION, WHILE DELIVERING EFFECTIVE SUPPORT TO NATIONAL EFFORTS.

THE PRIMARY PURPOSES OF THIS WORKSHOP ARE:

³⁵₁₇ TO ENSURE THAT WE ARE IN THE BEST POSITION MOVING FORWARD AFTER SAMOA;

³⁵₁₇ TO ENSURE THAT WE ARE ABLE TO IMPLEMENT THE SDGS AND POST 2015 GOALS SIMULTANEOUSLY;

³⁵₁₇ TO ENSURE THAT ONE SET OF GOALS DOES NOT SUFFER BECAUSE OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OTHER;

³⁵₁₇ TO ENSURE THAT WE TAKE AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT -- ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL; AND
³⁵₁₇ TO ENSURE THAT THE EVALUATION PROCESS IS EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT.

THIS QUEST REQUIRES A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF FINANCIAL COMMITMENT AND ASSURANCE. NGOS AND DIFFERENT CIVIC AGENCIES ARE EXTENDING THEIR HANDS, AND THE BAHAMAS IS IN A POSITION NOW TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MANY OF THE AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITIES. THIS GOVERNMENT IS POISED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EVERY AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITY.

ANY VISION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FIT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY “MUST RECOGNISE THAT ERADICATING POVERTY AND ACHIEVING SOCIAL JUSTICE ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO ENSURING ECOLOGICAL STABILITY AND RENEWAL”¹. THE VISION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS IS OF A COUNTRY WHERE ALL CITIZENS ARE ECONOMICALLY EMPOWERED TO PROVIDE FOR THEMSELVES AND

¹ 'A Safe And Just Space For Humanity', Oxfam (2012)

THEIR FAMILIES AND ALL HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OF ACCESS TO SERVICES THAT WILL ENHANCE THE BASIC QUALITY OF THEIR LIVES. THIS GOVERNMENT HAS INDEED RE-ESTABLISHED THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HAS EXPANDED ITS ROLES TO INCLUDE A RENEWED COMMITMENT TO ADDRESSING GENDER AFFAIRS.

IF WE ARE TO REACH THE MDGS, WE HAVE FIRST TO ASSESS THE PROGRESS WE HAVE ALREADY MADE. THIS IS CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT AS WE CHART THE WAY FORWARD. WE WILL ALSO NEED TO STRENGTHEN AND IDENTIFY NEW COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS. THIS IS THE PRIMARY REASON WE ARE GATHERED HERE TODAY - TO ILLUMINATE NEW SOLUTIONS TO OLD PROBLEMS. AND FINALLY, WE ARE HERE TO IDENTIFY OUR PRIORITIES, THEN AND ONLY THEN, WILL WE HAVE A CONCISE, FOCUSED AND ACTION-ORIENTED PLAN FOR PROGRESS. THE GOVERNMENT IS FIRMLY COMMITTED TO ADDRESSING OUR NEEDS AND VULNERABILITIES AND WE WELCOME THE PENDING COLLABORATION. THIS IS ONLY ONE STEP IN THE PROCESS. THE RESULTS OF THIS ONE DAY WORKSHOP

WILL FEED INTO THE CARIBBEAN SIDS REGIONAL DOCUMENT, AND IMPACT THE DISCUSSION AT THE HIGH LEVEL MINISTER'S MEETING AS WE SPEAK TO THE INTERESTS OF SIDS GLOBALLY, AND AS WE PREPARE FOR THE COP IN WARSAW.

WHEN HE WAS SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UN, KOFI ANNAN SAID: "ALL OUR EFFORTS WILL BE IN VAIN IF THEIR RESULTS ARE REVERSED BY CONTINUED DEGRADATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND DEPLETION OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES." LET US NOT FORGET THIS. AND LET US RENEW AND STRENGTHEN OUR RESOLVE TO MAKE SURE THAT WE DELIVER THE RESULTS BY 2015.

I WISH YOU EVERY SUCCESS AND LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING THE OUTCOME REPORT.