

H.E. Dr. Marian Williams
Permanent Representative, Ambassador, Barbados



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Statement by Barbados on the Occasion of the
Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Bahamas,
Wednesday, January 23, 2013

Thank you Madame President.

Barbados wishes to extend a very warm welcome to the delegation from the Bahamas, in particular the Head of Delegation, We recognise the effort made by the team to be here today and appreciate their active engagement in this session.

We also wish to take this opportunity to commend the Bahamas for the very high quality of the report presented and for sharing their experiences and national initiatives aimed at promoting and protecting human rights at all levels.

Madame President, my delegation will now touch on a few key policy decisions detailed in the report.

Firstly, we wish to commend the Bahamas for signing and ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2008. Signing and ratifying the said treaties are a testament to the importance which the Bahamas attaches to the promotion and protection of such rights.

As a small state with resource and capacity constraints, we recognize the ongoing challenges faced by the Bahamas in harmonizing and integrating international obligations with national legislation. This task has become increasingly difficult, particularly in a context of an ever expanding body of human rights treaties, norms and principles. We therefore welcome the enhanced presence of the OHCHR in the Caribbean region and call upon the said office to further assist capacity constrained Small states in the Caribbean to address this issue.

On recent legislative and policy issues, my delegation notes that a Constitution Reform Commission was reinstated in August 2012 and a referendum on constitutional issues is to be conducted in 2013. We look forward to the findings of the said Commission and referendum and view this inclusive approach as being part of the robust democratic traditions of the Bahamas. There is no doubt that such an approach on this most

important matter, will serve to strengthen the institutional framework for the protection of human rights.

We also note the efforts of the Bahamian Government in passing an extensive suite of legislation which seeks to enhance the social and economic wellbeing of the Bahamian people. We note in particular recent legislation passed in relation to children, women, the disabled and recent policies which inter alia seek to promote gender equality and a more accountable, transparent and effective judicial system. We also note positively the efforts which seek to integrate a human rights sensitization programme into the general curriculum in schools.

Madame President,

The Bahamas' commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights is evidenced not only in the report presented here today, but by the country's active participation in the international human rights system and the its signature and ratification of the majority of human rights instruments. However, like many capacity constrained states, delays in the presentation of reports to treaty bodies sometimes occur. We therefore call on the treaty bodies and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights once more, to work with capacity constrained states where possible to address this issue.

In concluding, Barbados is of the view that there is much in this report and in the manner in which the Bahamas has approached its human rights obligations which must be commended, and we take this opportunity to wish them a successful UPR.

Thank you.

Permanent Mission of Barbados
23/January/2013