

**INTERVENTION ON PARLIAMENTARY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE, NATIONAL REPORTING

COOPERATION MECHANISM, AND OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE**

**FOURTH CYCLE OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

**OF**

**THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS**

**AT THE**

**43RD SESSION OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW WORKING GROUP**

**UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**3RD MAY 2023**

 **GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

Mr. President,

As the Honourable Prime Minister said to the United Nations General Assembly last year, “*We Bahamians are – justifiably, I believe -- proud of what we have accomplished in our fifty years of independence. We are free, democratic, entrepreneurial, and resilient, and our small size has not held us back from great achievements at home and on the world stage*.”

 **Parliamentary Human Rights Committee**

One of our recent achievements has been the tabling of a resolution to establish a Parliamentary Human Rights Committee. The Parliament plays a critical role for the realization of human rights at the national level, which then directly facilitates the Government’s compliance with its human rights obligations on the regional and international levels. This would include the translation and implementation of recommendations arising from regional and international human rights mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the United Nations treaty body system and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council (HRC).

No such entity as a “*Parliamentary Human Rights Committee*” has ever existed within the Parliament of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas and there has been no such entity appointed by the Cabinet of The Bahamas to date; thus, with its establishment, the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee is the first of its kind, and yet another step that the Government is taking to concretely address human rights issues, in keeping with national, regional and international obligations.

**National Reporting Cooperation Mechanism (NRCM)**

Mr. President, The Bahamas also continues its efforts to maintain our reporting obligations under the international human rights instruments. An example of this is the continued activities of National Reporting Cooperation Mechanism (NRCM), which serves as our National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRF). It is led by the Office of the Attorney-General and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs serves as deputy chair. The approach used to formulate this body was very strategic as the NRCM is comprised of representatives from approximately nine (9) different government agencies and two people from Civil Society organisations.

The NRCM has been successful in drafting a master framework for the scheduling, preparation and submission of the required reports. They are presently putting a lot of energy into determining the best method to obtain information required for the preparation of the convention reports enabling a timely submission.

The mechanism also engages in efforts to sensitize the public and government entities through a number of training sessions, which are geared towards education, engagement and empowerment.

The Bahamas also continues to support the work and establishment of NMIRFs at the international level, including as a member of the Group of Friends of NMIRFs at the Human Rights Council,

**Office of the Ombudsman**

The Bahamas has tabled before its Parliament for Ombudsman Bill, 2023. The proposed Ombudsman Bill is intended to utilize an ombudsman model National Human Rights Institute structure where the Ombudsman institution will not only be empowered to investigate complaints relating to maladministration but also breaches of fundamental human rights. We are determined to ensure the existence of a Paris Principles compliant NHRI that is equipped to receive, investigate and resolve complaints, mediate conflicts and monitor activities as well as promote human rights through education, outreach, the media, publications, training, advising and assisting the Government. We also look forward to the contributions our NHRI will make toward measuring progress in our implementation of Agenda 2030.

The Ombudsman Bill, 2023 achieves these important human rights goals.