

**Statement by Ms. Bernadette Butler**

**Minister-Counsellor, Permanent Mission of**

**the Commonwealth of The Bahamas**

**33rd Session of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group**

**Geneva, Switzerland**

**Third Cycle Review of the Commonwealth of Dominica**

**9th May 2019**

Thank you Madame Vice President,

The Bahamas warmly welcomes the Honourable Francine Baron, Minister for Foreign and CARICOM Affairs and the delegation of our sister CARICOM nation and fellow Small Island Developing State, the Commonwealth of Dominica, to its Third Cycle Universal Periodic Review.

We note the challenges faced by Dominica, in particular with regard to the catastrophic natural disasters that it has experienced in the past five years, which have severely impacted its financial and human resources. However, The Bahamas notes that the country has maintained its strong commitment to the promotion of human rights, striving to ensure tangible benefits from the exercise of these rights by its citizens.

While acknowledging that there is still work to be done, The Bahamas commends the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica for strengthening systems for the prevention of and response to Gender-based and wider forms of violence in the society, notably, via the amendment of the Sexual Offences Act; public awareness education programmes with regard to gender-based violence; training sessions for front line workers; and collaboration between the Bureau of Gender Affairs and UN Women through the *“Social Mobilization to end Gender-based violence in the Eastern Caribbean”.*

The Bahamas is pleased that Dominica has taken measures to secure the human rights of its indigenous ‘Kalinago’ people through the creation of a Ministry of Kalinago Affairs, and its ratification of the

*Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.* The Bahamas welcomes the care given to the elderly in Dominican society with the provision of financial support and free home care through its “Yes We Care” programme.

Further, The Bahamas commends the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica on the concrete steps that it has taken to create the world’s first *Climate-Resilient Country* and to mainstream climate resilience into a number of sectoral policies and programmes. We also welcome the ambitious task it has embarked upon to provide, safe, resilient and comfortable living conditions for its citizens.

The Bahamas recognizes that the Commonwealth of Dominica needs further financial and technical support from the international community to fulfil its international human rights obligations. We note the assistance already given by the international community and call for further funding and technical assistance to enable the Commonwealth of Dominica to participate fully in the international human rights arena. We also highlight that international debt classification and financing should take into account the vulnerability of Small Island Developing States and the imperative of building resilience to climate change.

We recommend that Dominica, once it is in the position to do so, should:

1. Complete the ongoing national procedures to ratify core Human Rights Conventions;
2. Fully implement the Draft National Gender Policy 2018-2028;
3. Establish a National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up; and
4. Promulgate legislative changes to address sexual offences against children.

The Bahamas wishes the Commonwealth of Dominica a successful Review.

I thank you.