



STATEMENT TO BE DELIVERED BY:

HIS EXCELLENCY, THE HONOURABLE FREDERICK A. MITCHELL

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THE BAHAMAS

AT THE

SEVENTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

GENERAL DEBATE

FRIDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2023

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

It is an honour and privilege to return to this podium this

year. This is my tenth appearance here. I am proud to be

back to this most important forum but doubly so because a

son of the CARICOM and wider Caribbean region sits as its

President. Ambassador Dennis Francis I wish you well and

suffice it to say The Bahamas stands ready to assist and

support.

The Bahamas National Statistics Institute reported this year, in the national census, that there are now 399,314 people living in The Bahamas. Let's call that 400,000. We are small. That's clear. We are 700 islands, cays, and reefs. That's clear. We have 4,000 square miles of land in 100,000 square miles of ocean. We are, therefore, a small island developing state. That is very clear.

The Prime Minister Philip Edward Brave Davis says that the number one foreign policy issue for The Bahamas is climate change. He has expressed the existential fear we face along with other island peoples whether in the Atlantic or the Pacific -- will we become climate refugees or will we face a watery grave.

Having expressed that sentiment in many fora throughout the world over the years, he has been in office, it was

shocking to hear one of our developed nation partners
position on climate reparations for loss and damage by his
country. Their response was that under no circumstances
would there be reparations for the loss and damage from
climate change.

Mr. President, small island developing states like The
Bahamas have been negotiating for loss and damage for
over thirty years.

So, it begs the question: how much 399,314 lives are worth.

The word 'reparations' means so much in another context

as well. Millions of African peoples were ripped from the

continent of Africa brought to the west and worked for free

for 200 years. In the British Empire they were so called

freed in 1834, worked for another 4 years in an

apprenticeship scheme for free. The British government

paid 20 million pounds to the slavers for the loss of their

property. That was then 40 forty per cent of the national budget of the United Kingdom. This is 17 billion pounds in today's monies, and we are advised that the bonds were just paid off in the year 2015. Yet not one penny was paid to the slaves or to their descendants. And not even an apology is being offered for the moral tragedy which slavery represents.

So 'no' to reparations on climate damage and 'no' to reparations on slavery. No over and over again.

The generation of our leaders that came before us did not accept no. That is why we are freer today than we were a generation ago, and they were freer than the generation before them.

When Michael Manley, the Jamaican Prime Minister stood at this podium after his historic victory at the polls in 1972

and demanded a New International Economic Order, his call for economic and social justice did not succeed, but it has been taken up by his successors who continue this call throughout the Caribbean. Mr. Manley was taking up the call by Marcus Garvey of Jamaica and Robert Love of The Bahamas from the generation before Mr. Manley. And Marcus Garvey was taking up the calls of W E B Dubois and James Weldon Johnson of Bahamian roots before him.

Lynden Pindling did not accept no when the Nassau

Accords were forged to say let Nelson Mandela go. Clearly

then 'no' is not an acceptable answer to an unfree people.

We in this generation take up the call: for Brave Davis and

The Bahamas no is not an acceptable answer.

So, The Bahamas wants the world to know that whether on

reparations for slavery or on climate change, 'no' is not the

correct answer. We must use our collective voices to reject

the gospel according to no. So long as we have our voices
we will pass our message to the next generation and so on
until we succeed, and justice is served.

We do not accept the gospel according to no when it comes
to Haiti. As the first Black Republic and the first independent
Caribbean state, Haiti has paid dearly for daring to declare
and assert their independence from colonial rule. First, they
were forced to pay some 20 billion dollars in today's money

to be left alone by their former colonial masters. Then they were, in the 20th century, ruled by an invading military for two decades that took all the wealth from their treasury and forced the payment of sums back to Washington D C. And today, we wonder why the situation is as it is.

The western world owes Haiti and the Haitian people, and we must fight to help them resolve their issues. The security situation in Haiti is untenable and I thank all the

governments in both the developed world, the United States and Canada, and in CARICOM for their work in trying to resolve the political and security crises there. I urge the people of Haiti, especially the leaders to do all that they can to continue to work toward a Haitian led political settlement.

Mr. President, this is a humanitarian crisis in our region for which the UN has received humanitarian pledges that can barely meet the on the ground humanitarian needs of the

Haitian people. We must approve with haste a UN Security

Council backed resolution on a multinational force for Haiti.

I thank the Government of Kenya for pledging to lead a

multinational force to improve the security issues in Haiti.

They, along with other states who have pledged support,

require a UNSC resolution to take action. Both the

Bahamas and Jamaica have pledged troops and other

CARICOM states-- humanitarian support.

A geopolitical settlement must also be possible in Cuba.

What a magnificent country, with a rich heritage, and a

smart people who have suffered from economic measures,

which seem imposed upon them, externally grounded in

ideology. But if you can do business with Viet Nam, there is

nothing in logic which prevents doing business with Cuba.

The irony of the situation is that money in US dollars is

difficult to process across Cuban boarder, yet nine or more

flights per day leave Miami for Havana and back again. The largest embassy in Havana is that of the United States. We appreciate all the steps that have been taken by the present US administration to revert to the status quo ante 2016 as a starting point but the most sensible thing to do is to drop all the restrictions and normalize relations with Cuba post haste. The continuation of the status quo represents a security problem for The Bahamas.

Finally, I wish to repeat a favourite theme of our Prime Minister, and this is the pathologies resulting from the asymmetrical relationship between our trading partners in the EU and the Americas on the question of financial services. The OECD and the EU have arrogated unto themselves to be the moral police of the world on issues of taxation. The result is that free trade no longer exists, but a tax process is being imposed by our former colonial

masters, so that it makes banking so difficult within our domestic spheres and international trade even more difficult. They have gone one-step farther by imposing the requirement for Electronic Travel Authority for you to enter their countries even when they say there is a no visa policy.

The Prime Minister, therefore, joins other developing states in supporting a UN Convention on Tax, which will govern standards on taxation frameworks including financial

services. The OECD cannot declare legitimacy for developing universal outputs while decision-making and membership remain exclusive. The UN is the appropriate and universal body to design and build an equitable and inclusive international tax administration architecture with equal-footed representation.

The Bahamas is 50 years old, this year. It was a proud moment for our citizens. If you go to the Sandilands Primary

School in my constituency in Nassau, and say the words of
a popular song, even the little children know the song.

Elkin Outten sang this:

Nassau is the capital, and the children say Bahamas

Bimini is the gateway the children say Bahamas

1492 Columbus landed, the children say Bahamas

1973 we were Free Bahamas

Happy anniversary Bahamas

Golden jubilee Bahamas

I leave it with you and invite you to come visit us, eight

million will join the 400,000 of us this year as tourists. Stay

enjoy our beauty and understand our climate vulnerability.

In our work we ask you to join us to help reverse the tidal

rising.

God bless you for listening.

Now more than ever we need the United Nations.

Thank you good night.