



## **NATIONAL STATEMENT**

High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development  
United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Transformation towards Sustainable and Resilient  
Societies  
Localizing the SDGs  
United Nations Headquarters, New York, New York  
18 July 2018

**The Most Honourable Dr. Hubert A. Minnis**  
**Prime Minister**  
**The Commonwealth of The Bahamas**





Mr. Chairman;

Excellencies;

Ladies and gentlemen.

I am pleased to be here today to make the first presentation of The Bahamas, at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

As a small island developing state, located in a volatile hurricane zone, The Bahamas identifies strongly with the theme for this year's Forum: "Transformation



towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies”.

We have been made more resilient by the necessity of having to rebound after being thrashed repeatedly by hurricanes.

Since gaining independence 45 years ago, The Bahamas has enjoyed a stable political climate and significant economic success.

We have witnessed a rise in life expectancy;

attained widespread literacy;



ensured greater access to preventative and curative healthcare;

and expanded educational opportunities for all.

This said, challenges remain. Approximately 12.5% of our population resides in poverty.

Economic opportunities and sound infrastructure are unevenly distributed.

Youth unemployment rates are consistently high.



There are still too many people without access to clean water piped to their homes. Many face poor educational and health outcomes.

In a country surrounded by water and basking in sunlight, we have made insufficient progress in becoming considerably more energy efficient and coastally resilient.

Amidst these challenges, the Government of The Bahamas is determined to move forward its national development



agenda, to enhance the quality of life for all in The Bahamas, in a manner that aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Chairman:

We are a caring people, endeavoring to nurture our children, cherish our elderly and protect our vulnerable.

We are a people who honour our culture and preserve our heritage, while welcoming of others.



We are stewards of our land and oceans.

These are some of the sentiments from the Vision Statement of our National Development Agenda, our long term strategic planning and reform agenda, which has effectively mapped the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, into virtually every relevant aspect of 16 national development goals.

Today, I would like to focus on a new initiative of the Government of The





Bahamas, which focuses on all of the key themes of this year's High Level Political Forum.

In 2017, my Government launched the Over-the-Hill Community Development Partnership Initiative.

The Over-the-Hill area sits on the southern side of a major ridge that runs across the midsection of the primary island of New Providence.



Historically, this ridge separated the wealthy merchant class from the working masses.

Over the years, as prosperity came to The Bahamas, many of the original residents moved to newly built suburbs.

Many who remained, or who moved in, were left behind, with dilapidated housing and struggling infrastructure.

It is an area where high levels of poverty, unemployment, crime and environmental degradation are rampant.



Nevertheless, this was and remains an historic proud area.

The Over-the-Hill Community Development Partnership Initiative, seeks to improve the living conditions within this urban area.

The focus of the partnership with the private sector, civil society and academia includes: establishing programmes which tackle the underlying causes of poverty.

This includes: the lack of training, soft and hard skills for job opportunities,



childhood trauma and victimization and access to affordable childcare, so that parents can work.

The Initiative also addresses the manifestations of poverty such as hunger, substandard housing, and inequitable access to quality health.

Mr. Chairman, this is Sustainable Development Goal 1, in Action.

The Initiative will introduce green energy to the community.



Many residents of this area do not have electricity.

We are seeking to provide them, as a first step, with small-scale alternative energy solutions such as solar lamps.

However, broader sustainable energy solutions are proposed and we look forward to piloting community solar projects in this area.

This is in line with our target to increasing the share of renewable energy resources to 30% by 2030.



This is Sustainable Development Goal 7  
in action.

Water and sanitation are also challenges. Approximately half of the 4,000 households in this community do not have access to piped water to their homes.

This may be because of disconnections for non-payment, or the lack of modern plumbing infrastructure within the household.

The alternative for many is the public water pump that provides clean, safe water.



However, as a Government, we feel that we can do better and we have committed to providing water for all within this community by 2025.

This will include improvements to the sewerage infrastructure and upgrading homes to accommodate piped water.

It will also include addressing issues of land reform, so that those who have been living in the community may make the necessary investments in their homes after they have clear property title.



This is Sustainable Development Goal 6  
in action in The Bahamas.

Chair, one of the elements that is  
striking about the Over-the-Hill community  
is its greenery.

Imagine a dense landscape of towering  
silk cotton trees with their substantial root  
systems and abundant fruit trees.

In contrast, we also have the blight of  
uncollected garbage, household and  
industrial waste.





My Government has already launched one of the largest clean up campaigns in our history in this community and is investing in bulky waste and more frequent trash collection.

We are supporting the value of trees in this area, by turning fruit into earnings as we promote backyard farming and encourage fruit vendors.

We are also providing additional support for a wetland just adjacent to the Over-the-Hill area called Big Pond, which is already



fitted with a boardwalk through the mangroves to support an appreciation for the bio-diversity of the community.

This is Sustainable Development Goal 15 in action.

The Over-the-Hill Initiative reimagines the relationships between downtown Nassau, which is the hub of economic activity and tourism, and the community of workers who live Over-the-Hill.



It looks to improve the key infrastructural issues of transportation, drainage, and affordable housing.

It seeks to create a community that is socially empowering for both the young and the elderly.

Indeed, one of the key features is a restored system of parks.

The Government has committed to the rejuvenation of all of Over-the-Hill's 15 parks, in particular its central park, the Southern Recreation Grounds.



We will make these parks more inviting and useable, and include access to Wi-Fi services.

This is Sustainable Development Goal 11 in action for The Bahamas.

Chair, beyond the Over-the-Hill project, our work toward fulfilling sustainable development for our people continues.

The Bahamas has increased its efforts to reintroduce and restore greenery to our country.



Additionally, as a big ocean nation, we seek to protect our seas.

As such, we have made a commitment to banning single-use plastics and Styrofoam by 2020.

In the immediate term, for the 2018/2019 fiscal year, we have committed \$5 million for LED street lighting.

Additionally, one of our power companies is undertaking a \$5 million solar energy park, capable of generating 4.5 million kilowatt hours annually of clean,



renewable energy, on Grand Bahama Island, home to our shipping, industrial and technology hubs.

We are also pursuing the modernization and digitization of our public institutions, so that they may better meet our development needs, and provide enhanced services to our citizens and residents.

Chair, we realize that our efforts will be a costly investment.

However, we know that the dividends in the long run, will make investing in these



goals worthwhile for the people of The Bahamas.

Much of our work is being done in partnership with others, not only to secure technical expertise, but because the challenges we face are collective.

We therefore seek to strengthen these partnerships, at all levels: local, national, regional, and international.

The Bahamas reiterates its commitment to localizing the Sustainable Development Goals into its National Planning processes.



Thank you and good morning.

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