



## MESSAGE FROM THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

This year is coming to a close amid much economic uncertainty. The realities of the credit crunch and continued volatility in the international financial markets and their negative impact on the rest of the economy have ensured that now is a time for sober reflection and stock-taking as to where things stand and where we should go from this point forward. As people all over the world tighten their belts and devise strategies to cope with these uncertain times, we are reminded more than ever of the interdependent nature of our world, which ensures that difficulties in one corner of the globe are felt all over. By the same token, the solution to the current economic difficulties will require each of us to make our contribution to solve what has become a collective problem.

The Bahamas has, like all other countries, felt the effects of the global economic slowdown coupled with the rising costs of energy and food which have contributed to an overall rise in the cost of living. The Bahamas has sought to tackle the problem head-on in an attempt to alleviate the burdens faced by its citizens. To this end the Government has crafted a number of strategies and interventions aimed at assisting those who are finding it difficult to make ends meet at this time, including relief on energy bills and increased social services and assistance.

While the Government has naturally had to adjust some of its economic forecasts to take account of the current situation, the Prime Minister has indicated that the Government also intends to review its capital investment programme to accelerate those projects that would contribute most to dealing with the fall-out from the economic slow-down, including rising unemployment. This programme includes road improvement works, construction of much-needed schools

and judicial and government office complexes and revitalization and beautification programmes in the capital. While a degree of economic circumspection is clearly required, particularly by individuals, the Government will seek to continue to manage the economy prudently, ensuring that infrastructure improvements come on stream and that The Bahamas is able to move swiftly to take advantage as and when the economic situation improves.

During these difficult times, The Bahamas has also continued to demonstrate its support for those hit particularly hard by natural disasters this year. The Bahamas has pledged financial and other support to both Haiti and the Turks and Caicos, both of whom were ravaged by hurricanes. The Bahamas is keenly aware of the devastating impact that natural disasters can have on small island developing states, and continues to stand shoulder to shoulder with our Caribbean brethren when support is needed.

The impact of the global economic slowdown is being felt most keenly in the tourism sector, which remains the main engine of the Bahamian economy. However, while the sector is undoubtedly facing challenging times, Bahamian tourism officials have taken a proactive approach, and have expressed their determination to use this opportunity to continue to improve all aspects of The Bahamas' tourism product and take steps to ensure that The Bahamas remains a premier tourism destination. At a time when persons are cutting back on travel, The Bahamas will make every effort to ensure that people who do travel to The Bahamas get the most value for every dollar spent, and that The Bahamas remains competitive.

The Bahamas is also taking the



opportunity to enhance its efforts at developing alternative energy sources throughout the country in order to reduce energy costs as well as move to a greater reliance on renewable energies which are more environmentally sustainable. The high cost of energy throughout this year has emphasised to all countries the pitfalls in relying solely on traditional sources of energy. For its part, The Bahamas will continue to explore alternative sources of energy, which can only contribute to the economic benefit of ordinary citizens, and enable us to preserve our beautiful natural environment.

Thus we have come to the end of 2008 sharing the same uncertainties as the rest of the world; however, we remain optimistic that we will all learn the lessons of the current financial crisis and the economic difficulties that have beset the globe, and that we will be in a position to take the necessary steps to ensure that we will weather the storm. It is our hope that we will in fact emerge from the current situation having laid the basis for a renewed period of prosperity and growth which will benefit the Bahamian people and persons across the globe.

We extend Season's Greetings to all of our readers, and wish them all a healthy and happy New Year.

Paul H. Farquharson, QPM  
High Commissioner  
Permanent Representative,  
International Maritime Organization

## 2008 IN REVIEW

The past year has been a very busy one for the High Commission, with both the High Commissioner and the diplomatic and consular staff involved in a wide range of activities. Despite the breadth and complexity of the Mission's work, the small but dedicated staff performed admirably in exercising the Mission's obligations to the international community, the Bahamian community in the United Kingdom and Europe and to the general public.

The year began with the arrival of the new High Commissioner, who assumed post on 2 February 2008. The High Commissioner was not given much time to settle in before being thrust into the varied duties and obligations of this multifaceted post. In keeping with the intention stated at the very outset of his tour of duty, High Commissioner Farquharson sought very early to establish links with the community of Bahamian nationals and students in the United Kingdom, by hosting a reception at the High Commission in March during which students and nationals got an opportunity to meet and greet the High Commissioner and his wife, the staff of the High Commission, The Bahamas Tourist Office and The Bahamas Maritime Authority. In traditional Bahamian style, refrains of 'who your people?' could be heard throughout what was a very successful evening.

The High Commissioner has sought to keep the links with the students and other Bahamian nationals strong, through visits to educational institutions, and supporting various members of the disciplined forces who have been training at institutions in the United Kingdom. The High Commission has also maintained strong ties to the Friends of The Bahamas group, who have collaborated with the High Commission on a number of initiatives in 2008, including in the field of education.

The promotion of Bahamian culture has been high on the High

Commission's agenda in 2008, often in close collaboration with The Bahamas Tourist Office, London. The highlight of this effort was undoubtedly the first-ever performance of Junkanoo in the United Kingdom, as members of various Bahamian Junkanoo groups travelled twice to the UK, first in April and then again in July, to perform in the Isle of Wight and at the Henley Festival. The Junkanoo performers also brought some colour and excitement to a dreary July evening on the South Bank with a



**One of the delights of Junkanoo summer: A performer lights up Ryde, Isle of Wight, July 2008**

stirring display, which had London office workers dancing at their desks. The High Commission was also delighted to welcome The Bahamas National Children's Choir who visited London in June, on the second leg of their 2008 Summer Tour. The highlight of the choir's visit to London was a concert performed at St. James's Church, Piccadilly, where they put on a magnificent display before an audience of staff of the High Commission, The Bahamas Tourist Office, The Bahamas Maritime Authority, members of the diplomatic corps, Bahamian nationals resident in the United Kingdom and members of the general public.

In addition to fulfilling its obligations to the Bahamian community and promoting Bahamian culture in the UK, the High Commission continued

to engage in the critically important political and economic issues arising from its multiple accreditations. Despite it being a year in which there was no regular Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the High Commission's accreditation to the Commonwealth Secretariat continued to keep it fully engaged. The Bahamas joined with other Commonwealth Member States in bidding farewell in March to the former Commonwealth Secretary General, H.E. Don McKinnon, and welcoming his successor H.E. Kamallesh Sharma, who assumed office on 1 April. The Bahamas maintained an active presence in the meetings of the various Governing Bodies of the Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation, and maintained a close watching brief on the Secretariat's myriad activities and the various high-level meetings of the Commonwealth held throughout the year, including the meetings of Commonwealth Ministers of Environment, Youth, Health, Law, Foreign Affairs, Finance and Tourism, and the Special Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government, held in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in September. The High Commission also participated in unofficial Commonwealth activities, as the High Commissioner's wife was actively involved in the planning process for the 2008 Commonwealth Fair, organised by the Commonwealth Countries League.

2008 also saw the convening of a number of Summit meetings of immediate interest to the High Commission, including the Fifth European Union - Latin America and Caribbean Summit held in Peru in May, the Fourth CARICOM - Spain Summit held in Spain in July, and the Sixth ACP Summit held in Ghana in October. Diplomatic officers of the Mission joined The Bahamas delegations for each of these Summit meetings, and the Mission remains actively engaged in the follow-up activities stemming from each of the meetings.



## 2008 IN REVIEW



**High Commissioner and Mrs. Farquharson with Councillor Francis Blois of Westminster Council at 2008 Independence Reception**

Closer to home, the Sixth UK - Caribbean Ministerial Forum was held in London in July. The High Commissioner and staff provided logistical and technical support to the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs who headed The Bahamas delegation to this important meeting. The Forum, which was held under the theme 'The UK/Caribbean Partnership in a Changing World', brought together Ministers from the United Kingdom and the Caribbean to discuss a wide range of issues of critical importance, including sustainable development, climate change, security and economic development.

The High Commission also engaged in a number of activities in Europe throughout the year stemming from its accreditation to the European Union, the ACP Secretariat, the World Trade Organization, the International Organization for Migration and the Bureau for International Expositions. The Mission's distance from Europe naturally limits the scope of its activities in this regard; however, active participation by the High Commissioner and diplomatic officers in various Ministerial and other meetings held under the auspices of these organizations ensured that The Bahamas' interests continued to be well represented.

A particular focus of the High Commission this year has been the Government's intention to conclude a visa waiver agreement with the European Union which would allow

Bahamian nationals to travel without visas for short stays to those European countries that apply the Schengen agreement. These discussions have progressed well throughout the year, as the High Commissioner and staff have been engaged in a series of negotiations with the European Commission which are now concluded. It is expected that the remaining steps in this process will be completed soon, and a new era of reciprocal visa-free travel for Bahamians and Europeans to our respective territories can begin, which would be of benefit to both sides.

The High Commission also continued to be an active participant in the proceedings of the International Maritime Organization, including the meetings of its Council, and various Committees and other sub-organs. In conjunction with The Bahamas Maritime Authority, headquartered in London, the High Commission ensured that The Bahamas' interests as the world's third largest ship registry were well represented at the IMO. The Bahamas' interest in and commitment to the continued development of safe shipping and the preservation of the marine environment was further demonstrated by the successful hosting of The Bahamas International Maritime Conference and Trade Show in Freeport, Grand Bahama in November.

Of course, the High Commission has also participated in the many events that form part of diplomatic life in London, including Royal events such as the Trooping of the Colour, the annual Buckingham Palace garden parties and HM the Queen's Evening Reception for the Diplomatic Corps, as well as the many National Day and other receptions hosted by members of the Diplomatic Corps. The High Commission continued to strengthen its close working relationship with its Caribbean colleagues, including through participation in the meetings of Caribbean High Commissioners, and activities organised by that group, including the first-ever official visit by the group as a whole to Scotland in June to

have meetings with representatives of the Scottish local government and assembly, and representatives of the private sector. The Consular staff of the High Commission also maintained close links with their colleagues, including through participating in the activities of the Consular Corps of London, such as its monthly luncheons.

Without a doubt, the highlight in the High Commission's social calendar was the reception hosted to celebrate the 35th anniversary of Independence of The Bahamas, held on 10 July in London. Members of the diplomatic corps and Bahamians turned out in great numbers to celebrate our Independence, and the event was a roaring success as always.

The High Commission has no doubt that 2009 will be an equally varied and busy year. The High Commission takes this opportunity to pay tribute to its staff, all of whom make an invaluable contribution to the work of the office. The High Commission also expresses its appreciation to members of the Diplomatic Corps, particularly Caribbean High Commissioners and their staff, UK authorities, The Bahamas Maritime Authority, The Bahamas Tourist Office, Honorary Consuls of The Bahamas in Europe and Bahamian nationals in the United Kingdom and Europe for all of their support and cooperation throughout the year. The High Commission looks forward to their continuing collaboration in the coming year in pursuing the myriad interests of The Bahamas in the UK and Europe and protecting the welfare of Bahamian nationals.



**Friends of The Bahamas Reception I. to r. Richard Moir, Chairman-Friends of The Bahamas, Valdez Russell, College of The Bahamas, High Commissioner Farquharson**

## THE BAHAMAS TO ESTABLISH MARITIME TRAINING INSTITUTE

The newly appointed Minister of the Environment, whose portfolio includes Maritime Affairs, the Honourable Earl D. Deveaux has announced that The Bahamas is to establish a Maritime Institute.

Speaking at The Bahamas Shipowners Association Meeting in London in November, the Minister revealed that talks are well advanced with the government, the Grand Bahama Port Authority, the College (soon to be the University) of The Bahamas and the Ministry of Education to establish this critical component for the Industry.

The Minister, in his opening address to the meeting noted that The Bahamas

has positioned itself, especially given its geography and legal infrastructure, to remain competitive in the maritime industry particularly in cruising, freight, pleasure craft and ship repair. He continued however that there is a shortage of trained staff and therefore applauded the vision and initiative of Mr. Anthony Price to establish a world class Maritime Training Institute in The Bahamas to train seafarers of all ranks.

The Bahamas Shipowners Association (BSA) held its annual general meeting at the International Maritime Office headquarters in London, which was attended by the Secretary General of the IMO, Mr. Efthimios E. Mitropoulos who delivered an address.



Minister the Honourable Earl Deveaux addresses the members of the Shipowners Association at the annual general meeting held on 5 November 2008



## GEF-UNDP-IMO *GloBallast Partnership Project* – The Bahamas on the Move



The Bahamas is a part of the GEF-UNDP-IMO *GloBallast Partnerships Project* as a Lead Partnering Country (LPC) in the Wider Caribbean region. The government of The Bahamas has recognized the introduction of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens into new marine ecosystems as a significant and growing environmental challenge, and is determined to preserve the sensitive environment of the Regional Seas and to contribute to finding solutions to this major global marine environmental issue.

Within the activities of the *GloBallast Partnerships Project*, The Bahamas recently organized the first National Task Force (NTF) meeting and Ballast Water Management Seminar on 16th September 2008 in Nassau at the Sandals Royal Bahamian Hotel. This meeting and workshop included presentations by various experts and government organizations on different aspects of the issue, such as invasive species introduced in the region, an overview of the IMO Ballast Water Management Convention, ballast water treatment

technologies, inspection procedures and issuance of certificates, ship documents and reporting aspects, sampling of ships' ballast water and analyses, baseline studies and monitoring of harbour areas. During the event the screening of the IMO-BBC TV documentary 'Invaders from the Sea' also took place. This successful meeting was an important milestone for the *GloBallast Partnerships Project* in The Bahamas. Over 25 participants from various government organizations, academia and private sector participated in the meeting. The all-inclusive strategy adopted by the Lead Agency (The Ministry of the Environment represented by The Port Department and BEST Commission) to organize this meeting resulted in raising significant awareness of the issue and the Project activities, as well as facilitating the consensus building amongst the participants on the future action plans.

The meeting was co-chaired by the *GloBallast National Focal point* for The Bahamas, Captain Anthony Allens from the Port Department and Mr. Deon Stewart from BEST Commission. The

seminar was facilitated by Dr Jose Matheickal, Chief Technical Adviser of IMO *GloBallast Partnerships* and Commander Jeffrey Ramos of the Regional Activity Center/Regional Marine Pollution Emergency, Information and Training Center (RAC/REMPEITC-Carib).

A major outcome of the national seminar was the consensus on a number of priority areas that were identified to address the ballast water issues and the decision to start developing a national ballast water management strategy and action plan, clearly demonstrating the success of this seminar.



Source - Dr. Jose Matheickal, Chief Technical Advisor, Marine Environment Division, IMO



## Sixth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) Accra, Ghana, 2- 3 October 2008

The 6th Summit of ACP Heads of State and Government was held in Accra, Ghana on 2 and 3 October 2008. The Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas was represented by the Hon T. Brent Symonette, M.P., Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs; and Mr. Frank Davis, First Secretary/Consul, Bahamas Mission to the European Communities, London.

The Summit of ACP Heads of State and Government is the supreme organ of the Group. It defines the Group's general policy orientation. Since 1997, Heads of State and Government of ACP member-countries have been meeting regularly to lay down the broad guidelines for the general policy of the ACP Group and give the Council of Ministers instructions relating to its implementation.

The Summit is presided over by the Head of State or Government of the host-country and organised by a Bureau comprising the President-in-Office, the outgoing President and the incoming President (if already designated).

Summits have been held as follows: First Summit, Libreville, Gabon, November 1997; Second Summit, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, November 1999; Third Summit, Nadi, Fiji, June 2002; Fourth Summit, Maputo, Mozambique, June 2004; and, Fifth Summit, Khartoum, Sudan, December 2006.

The Sixth Summit was preceded by a meeting of the ACP Council of Ministers on 30 September 2008, and a joint meeting of the ACP Council of Ministers and Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 1 October 2008. The Summit was officially opened by His Excellency J.A. Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana and incoming President of the ACP Group. Assuming his new role, President Kufuor thanked the outgoing President of the ACP Summit and Sudan's President, Omer Hassan, Ahmed Al-Bashir for holding the fort for the past two years and for the wonderful cooperation between the officials of the two countries which had contributed to the smooth arrangements for the Sixth Summit. The President said that the ACP countries are determined to empower

their peoples to take advantage of the ever-increasing opportunities which would help them to integrate meaningfully into the global economic system and impact positively on their development.

Other speakers included Sir John Kaputin, ACP Secretary General, H.E. Robert Hill, Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations, who brought greetings on behalf of the Prime Minister of Australia, and Mrs. Glenys Kinnock, MEP, Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.



ACP Heads of State and Government

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## SIGNING OF THE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (EPA) BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND CARIFORUM COUNTRIES

In keeping with a decision taken at the Third Special Meeting of Heads of State/Government of CARIFORUM on September 10, 2008, the Signing Ceremony for the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the European Union and the CARIFORUM countries took place in Bridgetown, Barbados on 15 October 2008.

The EPA is a trade agreement that provides for more liberal trade between CARIFORUM countries and the European Community. It will progressively allow certain exports from the two regions to enter each other's territories duty-free and quota free. It also defines how trade in services and investment can take place between the two regions.

The EPA is designed to replace the trade component of the Cotonou Agreement, which was based on non-reciprocity. It is a trade instrument with strong development components and is expected to help CARIFORUM to export more and thereby increase employment, business opportunities and economic growth, which can lead to sustainable development.

The Agreement was signed on behalf of The Bahamas by the Hon. T. Brent Symonette, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. While The Bahamas signed the Agreement, it will only enjoy benefits on the export of goods until its Services Schedule is added to the Agreement, which must be done within six months of signing.

All CARIFORUM Member States, with the exception of Haiti and Guyana signed the agreement on 15 October. The Government of Guyana subsequently signed on the 20th October. However, the Government of Haiti, which has been heavily occupied with addressing national stabilization and recovery in the aftermath of recent tropical hurricanes, has requested more time to review the Agreement.

CARIFORUM consists of the Member States of the CARICOM and the Dominican Republic. For more details on the CARIFORUM-EC Economic Partnership Agreements, please visit [www.crn.org](http://www.crn.org).



## AMBASSADOR FARQUHARSON PRESENTS CREDENTIALS TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC

His Excellency Paul H. Farquharson presented his formal Letters of Credence to His Excellency Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Italian Republic, accrediting him as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas to the Italian Republic, with residence at London, on 15th October, 2008.



Ambassador and H.E. Giorgio Napolitano

Ambassador Farquharson presented his Letters of Credence during a brief ceremony at the Quirinale Palace in Rome, the official residence of the President of the Italian Republic. Ambassador Farquharson was accompanied at the ceremony by Ms. Nicole Archer, First Secretary/Vice-Consul, Bahamas Embassy.

Following the ceremony the Ambassador was invited to a private conversation with the President and his advisers in the President's office, during which Ambassador Farquharson and the President discussed matters of mutual interest to The Bahamas and Italy.

While in Italy the Ambassador also met with Dr. Pasquale Intonti, Honorary



Ambassador meets with the President and his advisors

Consul of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas in Rome, and discussed ways to promote greater cultural, educational, tourism and business ties between The Bahamas and Italy.

## UPDATE ON VISA WAIVER AGREEMENT FOR SCHENGEN COUNTRIES

On 19 November 2008, representatives of The Bahamas and the European Commission initialled a short stay visa waiver agreement which, when implemented, will facilitate reciprocal visa free travel for short stays for citizens of The Bahamas and the European Union. The agreement was initialled for The Bahamas by H.E. Paul Farquharson, Ambassador to the European Communities, and for the European Community by Mr. Jean-Louis de Brouwer, Director General, Justice, Freedom and Security, European Commission.

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The concluded agreement will now undergo the required internal ratification

processes on both sides. Implementation of the agreement will represent the culmination of a process that began formally with the adoption of European Council Regulation



Back row l. to r.- Bas Van Helden, European Commission, Albert Jean Niels, Bahamas Honorary Consul, Belgium, Nicole Archer - First Secretary. Front Row-Jean-Louis de Brouwer, European Commission, Ambassador Farquharson

1932/2006 adopted on 21 December 2006, which moved The Bahamas and five other countries from the list of

countries requiring visas, to the list of countries exempt from this requirement. Since that time, The Bahamas and the European Commission have engaged in a very constructive negotiating process, which has now resulted in a very successful outcome.

The High Commission wishes to stress, for the benefit of Bahamian nationals in the United Kingdom wishing to travel to Europe, that until the ratification process is completed Bahamians will continue to require visas to enter Schengen territories. Schengen visas should continue to be secured from the appropriate European Embassy or Consulate in the United Kingdom, until further notice.

## AMBASSADOR FARQUHARSON PRESENTS CREDENTIALS TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

H.E. Paul H. Farquharson presented his formal Letters of Credence to His Excellency José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, accrediting him as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Head of the Mission to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas to the European Communities, on 20th November, 2008.

Ambassador Farquharson presented his Letters of Credence during a short meeting at the Headquarters of the European Commission in Brussels.

Ambassador Farquharson was accompanied at the meeting by Ms. Nicole Archer, First Secretary/Vice-Consul, Bahamas Mission to the European Communities, and Mr. Albert Jean Niels, Honorary Consul of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, Belgium.

Following the presentation of the letters of credence, the Ambassador and the President of the Commission engaged in a brief discussion related to current international developments as well as relations between The Bahamas and

the European Community.



Ambassador presenting credentials to Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission



## TAPPING THE ASIAN MARKET

The Minister for Tourism & Aviation, Senator the Honourable Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace led a team of officials to China in early November, for the purpose of expanding The Bahamas as a destination in the Asian market. The Minister and his team met with the firm Golin Harris, The Bahamas' public relations firm in Beijing, as well as Chinese tour operators and airline companies.

At the press conference in Beijing the Minister talked about a different approach to marketing in the region. The strategy involves establishing The Bahamas as part of combination trips to North America. This would include travel packages to the US and Canada for business or leisure travellers.

The Minister also attended a trade show in Beijing, organised by the Chinese National Tourism Administration which featured companies and people from all over the world, including Florida. Some exhibitors included representatives from companies which send large numbers of business and leisure travellers to the United States and Canada. The Minister commented on The Bahamas' hopes for tapping into the Chinese diaspora in Toronto, Vancouver and in Atlanta which were not previously accessible. He also noted that Florida was keen on the combination packages with The Bahamas, as it was an opportunity to enhance their product.

The Minister deemed the trip to China as very useful and further enthused "that it was an opportunity for us to begin to test what we think is our best strategy in that part of the world . . .and it was extraordinarily well received".

The Minister welcomed the opportunity for increased accessibility to the Asian market as a result of the commencement of the issuance of visas to Chinese nationals by The Bahamas Embassy in Beijing.

The schedule of visits included Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai. Ms. Karen Seymour, Director for Europe and Asia in The Bahamas Tourist Office, London, UK was a member of the delegation.

## World Travel Market 2008



Richard English, Baha Mar and Hon. Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace, Minister of Tourism

The Bahamas was well represented at World Travel Market (WTM) 2008, one of the travel industry's biggest events. Staged annually in London under one roof it is a must attend, business to business exhibition that provides a unique opportunity for the whole global travel trade industry to meet, network, negotiate and conduct business. WTM,

provides the opportunity to efficiently, effectively and productively stay abreast of the latest developments in the travel industry.

The Islands of the Bahamas booth was situated as usual in the Caribbean village. In attendance were the Minister of Tourism and Aviation, the Honourable Mr. Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace, Tourism's

Director General, Ms. Vernice Walkine, Deputy Director General, Mr. Ellison Tommy Thompson, alongside hotel partners, Senior VP Sales & Marketing Reps of Bahamas hotels and resorts. The exhibition took place at the ExCeL Centre in London Docklands, from 10-13 November 2008.

## XL Airways France Operates Weekly Paris/Nassau Direct Air Services

The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism announced the start of French airlines, 'XL Airways France' air services, direct flights from Paris to The Bahamas from 18 December 2008.

The services operate on Thursdays departing Paris, Charles de Gaulle airport, Terminal 2A at 9:15 am arriving in Nassau at 1:40 pm. This ensures easy connections to Grand Bahama Island and most of the Family Islands (Out Islands) of The Bahamas. Departures from Nassau are at 3:10 pm with a stop in Varadero, Cuba, then continue on to Charles de Gaulle airport arriving at 9:15 am the next morning.

This route is operated as a regular route and comes in addition to the fully chartered flight of XL Airways France to San Salvador for Club Med. The route is

serviced with an Airbus, and seats are committed to three French tour operators, Thomas Cook, 1001 Soleils and XL.com, with the remaining seats to reservations and Varadero, Cuba.

Majestic Travel has been appointed by XL Airways France as their Ground Service Agents for The Bahamas.

Return fares for Paris/Nassau start at €778 taxes included (approximately 1,015 USD). [www.xlairways.fr](http://www.xlairways.fr)

French tour operators have largely increased their Bahamas programmes as of Winter season 08/09 and propose a variety of destinations within the Islands of The Bahamas. For more information contact the following European offices:

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## HIGH COMMISSIONER FARQUHARSON VISITS STUDENTS IN KENT, UK

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The High Commissioner in continuation of his objective to enhance the Mission's outreach and relationship with Bahamian students, visited Kent in early October. The visit had a dual purpose: firstly to meet with students and exchange views on their experiences in the UK, their interaction with the Mission and the latter's responsibilities to Bahamian students; secondly to hold meetings with various education officials from the University of Kent to advance talks on cooperation between the College of The Bahamas and the University of Kent. The High Commissioner was assisted in the discussions by Ms. Paulet Brown, a Senior Lecturer at the University of East London. Ms. Brown accompanied High Commissioner to Kent



High Commissioner with Bahamian Students, Nationals and Faculty from the University of Kent. Photo by Spencer Scott, University of Kent

along with Mr. Alan Benjamin from The Bahamas Maritime Authority, London.

The students warmly received the High Commissioner and hosted him to a luncheon with the University officials and later that evening to a 'Bahamian style' reception. The High Commissioner hopes to maintain a good relationship with the

students and remains committed to the expansion of educational opportunities for students in the United Kingdom through collaborative programmes between the College of The Bahamas, the University of Kent and other tertiary level institutions across the UK and Europe.

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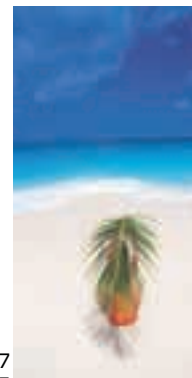
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**Bahamians, who encounter difficulties in any country where there is no Bahamian Embassy or Consulate present, should contact the nearest British Embassy or High Commission for assistance.**



## NOTICE TO STUDENTS

Students are reminded that UK Border Immigration has begun phasing in its new immigration rules and regulations governing foreign nationals in the UK. Students should ensure that they are well versed with the changes which are set out on the UK Border Agency webpage: <http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk/>. Students should ensure that they are always in status, because an expired immigration status may affect one's ability to successfully obtain an extension. Persons intending to pursue full time studies in the UK must obtain a student permit prior to entering the United Kingdom. It is no longer possible to obtain a student permit at the port of entry unless the course of study is a maximum of six months. The new Tier 4, which governs students will come into full effect in April 2009. Students will then have to be sponsored by educational institutions which will be legally responsible for monitoring and reporting to UK Border Immigration on the student's attendance and performance at these institutions. All the necessary

information required on rights to remain as a student in the UK are on the websites cited in this notice, please read up.

Another important new immigration regulation which students should be informed on, is the requirement for identity cards. Foreign Nationals will be required to obtain identity cards, and foreign students will be among the first group to be phased in.

<http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/managingborders/idcardsforforeignnationals/>

