



**CONTRIBUTION TO THE**

**2011-2012 BUDGET OF  
THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS**

**BY**

**THE HONOURABLE T. BRENT SYMONETTE, MP  
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
NASSAU, THE BAHAMAS  
31<sup>ST</sup> MAY, 2011**

**MR SPEAKER,**

1. IT IS BOTH A PRIVILEGE AND A PLEASURE TO RISE TODAY TO PRESENT MY CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2011/2012 BUDGET DEBATE. IT IS THE FOURTH TIME THAT I AM DOING SO IN MY CAPACITY AS MINISTER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS. I WISH, AT THE OUTSET, TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE AND DEEP APPRECIATION TO THE WONDERFUL CONSTITUENTS OF ST ANN'S, FOR THEIR WARM AND STEADFAST SUPPORT OVER THE YEARS.

2. **MR SPEAKER,** THE 2010/2011 BUDGET WAS PRESENTED AGAINST A BACKDROP OF A GLOBAL ECONOMIC RECESSION, WHICH HAD AND CONTINUES TO HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR OWN ECONOMY. COGNIZANT OF THE FACT THAT REVENUES WERE DECLINING SHARPLY, AND MOREOVER, THAT THE GOVERNMENT, OF WHICH MY MINISTRY IS A PART, IS BY AND FAR THE LARGEST CONSUMER OF GOODS AND SERVICES IN OUR COMMONWEALTH, THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WAS CHALLENGED TO MAKE SIZEABLE REDUCTIONS IN ITS ANNUAL EXPENDITURE, AND TO EFFECT MEANINGFUL CHANGES IN ITS APPROACH TO ITS WORK, BUT TO DO SO, **MR SPEAKER,** WITHOUT SEVERELY COMPROMISING OUR SERVICE DELIVERY. THIS STRATEGY NECESSARILY CONTINUES TODAY, FOR THOUGH THERE IS A GLIMMER OF LIGHT AT THE END OF THE ECONOMIC TUNNEL, THE VOLATILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS PROFOUNDLY IMPACTING OIL PRICES AND, WITH ESCALATING FOOD PRICES AS WELL, IS CONTRIBUTING TO THE CURRENT ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY.

3. **MR SPEAKER,** THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE BAHAMAS. THIS INCLUDES ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING HARMONIOUS RELATIONS WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS (OF WHICH WE HAVE FORMAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH OVER 100 STATES), SECURING OUR BORDERS, PROMOTING AND ENHANCING ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL INTERESTS, PROTECTING AND CONSERVING OUR ENVIRONMENT, *INTER ALIA*. WE ALSO PROVIDE SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE TO OUR BAHAMIAN NATIONALS ABROAD. ALL OF THIS IS DONE THROUGH A NETWORK OF OFFICES WHICH INCLUDES OUR HEADQUARTERS AND CONSULAR DIVISION IN NASSAU, OUR PASSPORT OFFICES IN NASSAU AND FREEPORT, AND TEN (10) DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR MISSIONS STRATEGICALLY POSITIONED OVERSEAS, BUTTRESSED BY OUR TWENTY (20) HONORARY CONSULS.

4. IT IS CLEAR FROM THIS, **MR SPEAKER,** THAT THE PERCEPTION OF MY MINISTRY AS AN ENTITY CONCERNED WITH ESOTERIC MATTERS COULD NOT BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES IMPACT THE LIVES OF EVERY CITIZEN AND, INDEED, ARE AT THE VERY HEART OF OUR EXISTENCE AS A NATION STATE.

5. **MR SPEAKER,** FOR THE UPCOMING FISCAL PERIOD, MY MINISTRY HAS BEEN ALLOCATED THE SUM OF TWENTY-THREE MILLION SIX HUNDRED NINETY-THREE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED SEVENTY DOLLARS (\$23,693,870), AN INCREASE OF ONE MILLION, SIX HUNDRED NINETY-FIVE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIX DOLLARS (\$1,695,526) OVER OUR BUDGET FOR FISCAL 2010/2011. AS WAS THE CASE LAST YEAR, THE LARGEST AMOUNTS HAVE BEEN

ALLOTTED TO BLOCK 1: PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS – SOME NINE MILLION, SIXTY THOUSAND, TWO HUNDRED SIXTY-EIGHT DOLLARS (\$9,060,268) – AND TO BLOCK 90: GRANTS, FIXED CHARGES & SPECIAL FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS, WHICH, FOR THE MOST PART, RELATE TO ASSESSED CONTRIBUTIONS TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS. THE AMOUNT ALLOCATED HERE IS SIX MILLION THREE HUNDRED NINETY-NINE THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED SIXTY-SEVEN DOLLARS (\$6,399,367). MORE WILL BE SAID ABOUT THIS SHORTLY.

6. **MR SPEAKER**, GIVEN THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALISATION AND THE ROLE OF MY MINISTRY IN HELPING TO MEET THESE CHALLENGES HEAD ON, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE HAVE A FOREIGN SERVICE COMPRISING WELL QUALIFIED, DEDICATED, ADAPTABLE AND MOTIVATED INDIVIDUALS. REGRETTABLY, **MR SPEAKER**, OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, WE HAVE LOST A NUMBER OF CAPABLE MID-LEVEL OFFICERS TO OTHER SECTORS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE. MOREOVER, OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS, WE EXPECT TO LOSE SEVERAL SENIOR AND MIDDLE LEVEL OFFICERS DUE TO RETIREMENT. THIS LOSS OF INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY COULD HAVE A DELETERIOUS EFFECT ON OUR ABILITY TO CARRY OUT OUR MANDATE IF, AT THE SAME TIME, WE DO NOT HIRE PERSONS WITH THE REQUISITE SKILL SETS.

7. WE ALSO HAVE TO ENSURE THAT THE CONDITIONS OF SERVICE ARE SIGNIFICANTLY ATTRACTIVE TO ENCOURAGE PERSONS TO JOIN THE SERVICE AND TO RETAIN THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY ON STAFF. PERSONS HAVE TO BE ASSURED THAT THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT. IT IS FOR THESE REASONS, **MR SPEAKER**, THAT FUNDS HAVE BEEN BUDGETED TO COVER LONG-OVERDUE PROMOTIONS FOR A WIDE CROSS-SECTION OF STAFF, BOTH AT HEADQUARTERS AND OVERSEAS.

8. EARLY ON, **MR SPEAKER**, MY MINISTRY HAD TAKEN A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO SEEK OUT THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST YOUNG GRADUATES FROM A NUMBER OF DISCIPLINES, IN AN EFFORT TO BOLSTER OUR RANKS. CONSEQUENTLY, IN ADDITION TO THE PROMOTIONS WHICH I HAVE JUST MENTIONED, WE HAVE ONCE AGAIN MADE PROVISION FOR PERSONS TO JOIN THE MINISTRY AT THE ENTRY LEVEL OF ADMINISTRATIVE CADET. THEY WILL BRING WITH THEM FRESH IDEAS WHICH WILL ENABLE THE MINISTRY TO CONSTANTLY ADAPT TO THE EVER-CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE.

9. DURING THE COURSE OF FISCAL 2011/2012, WE WILL CONTINUE OUR IN-HOUSE FOREIGN LANGUAGE SESSIONS, WHICH WILL BE REINFORCED BY SPECIALISED, CERTIFIED TRAINING, TO BE PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS. IT IS ALSO OUR INTENTION, **MR SPEAKER**, TO CONTINUE TO AVAIL OURSELVES OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIPLOMATIC TRAINING OFFERED BY OTHER COUNTRIES AS PART OF THEIR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES.

#### **PASSPORT AND VISA SERVICES**

10. **MR SPEAKER**, FOR THE MOST PART, THE GENERAL PUBLIC'S KNOWLEDGE OF MY MINISTRY'S RESPONSIBILITIES IS LIMITED TO THE CONTACT WHICH IT HAS WITH THE PASSPORT OFFICE AND THE CONSULAR DIVISION OF THE MINISTRY, BOTH OF WHICH ARE IMMEDIATELY CONCERNED WITH CUSTOMER

SERVICE, AND BOTH OF WHICH AREAS HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN THE OBVIOUS REVENUE EARNERS IN THIS MINISTRY.

11. **MR SPEAKER, LET ME DEAL WITH THE PASSPORT OFFICE FIRST.** THE MANDATE OF THIS OFFICE IS THE PROVISION OF A RESPONSIVE, SECURE, AND EFFICIENT PASSPORT SERVICE FOR CITIZENS OF THE BAHAMAS. UP TO APRIL 30<sup>TH</sup> OF THIS YEAR, A TOTAL OF ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEEN THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED SIXTY-EIGHT (118,968) E-PASSPORTS HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO OUR NATIONALS SINCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW E-PASSPORT SYSTEM IN DECEMBER 2007. OF THIS NUMBER, NINETY-SIX THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY-THREE (96,273) E-PASSPORTS WERE ISSUED BY OUR NASSAU OFFICE, FIFTEEN THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED FIVE (15,805) WERE ISSUED IN FREEPORT, TWO THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED SEVENTY-THREE (2,873) IN ABACO, AND TWO THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED SIXTY-THREE (2,263) WERE ISSUED BY OUR OVERSEAS OFFICES. ON AVERAGE, **MR SPEAKER,** SOME EIGHT HUNDRED NINETY-THREE (893) E-PASSPORTS WERE ISSUED EACH WEEK, WITH A PEAK VOLUME OF ONE THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED SEVEN (1,607) E-PASSPORTS ISSUED PER WEEK DURING THE BUSY SUMMER HOLIDAY SEASON.

12. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT, ALTHOUGH ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEEN THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED SIXTY-EIGHT (118,968) E-PASSPORTS HAVE BEEN ISSUED AND COLLECTED, IN ACTUAL FACT, APPROXIMATELY ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-TWO THOUSAND (122,000) HAVE BEEN PRODUCED. WHAT THIS MEANS, **MR SPEAKER,** IS THAT APPROXIMATELY THREE THOUSAND THIRTY-TWO (3,032) E-PASSPORTS ARE AWAITING COLLECTION BY APPLICANTS.

13. **MR SPEAKER,** REVENUE GENERATED TO 30 APRIL FROM E-PASSPORTS DURING THE PRESENT FISCAL PERIOD AMOUNTS TO ONE MILLION FOUR HUNDRED SEVENTY- SEVEN THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED SEVEN DOLLARS AND FORTY-EIGHT CENTS (\$1,477,307.48). THIS IS FIVE HUNDRED THIRTY- ONE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FOUR DOLLARS AND TWENTY-SEVEN CENTS (\$531,574.27) LESS THAN THE AMOUNT GENERATED OVER A SIMILAR PERIOD DURING FISCAL 2009/2010.

**HEAD 13 – MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
REVENUE REPORT – PASSPORT AND VISA FEES  
SUMMARY OF REVENUE COLLECTED AND DEPOSITED FOR THE PERIOD OF  
JULY 2008 – APRIL 2011**

<b>PERIOD</b>	<b>PASSPORT REVENUE</b>
<b>December 2007 to June 2008</b>	<b>\$ 623,601.00</b>
<b>July 2008 to June 2009</b>	<b>\$1,567,102.39</b>
<b>July 2009 to June 2010</b>	<b>\$2,008,881.75</b>
<b>July 2010 to April 2011</b>	<b>\$1,477,307.48</b>

<b>PERIOD</b>	<b>VISA REVENUE</b>
<b>July 2009 to April 2010</b>	<b>\$605,284.90</b>
<b>July 2010 to April 2011</b>	<b>\$505,130.96</b>

14. **MR SPEAKER**, GIVEN THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS SECTOR OF THE MINISTRY AS A GENERATOR OF INCOME, WE ARE ENGAGED IN A NUMBER OF ONGOING EFFORTS TO ENSURE EXPEDITIOUS AND TIMELY SERVICE. THESE EFFORTS INCLUDE:

- THE RELOCATION OF OUR PASSPORT OFFICE IN FREEPORT TO CUSTOM-BUILT PREMISES, WHICH WILL GO A LONG WAY TOWARD ENSURING A COMFORTABLE WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR STAFF AND CLIENTELE ALIKE;
- PROVISION FOR MORE FREQUENT VISITS TO THE FAMILY ISLANDS BY THE MOBILE UNIT OF THE PASSPORT OFFICE, THEREBY MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR PERSONS IN THOSE ISLANDS TO OBTAIN THEIR E-PASSPORTS, WITHOUT HAVING TO INCUR THE EXPENSE OF TRAVELLING TO THE CAPITAL TO OBTAIN THE SAME. IN FACT, **MR SPEAKER**, DURING FISCAL 2010-2011, USE OF THE MOBILE UNITS ACCOUNTED FOR THE ISSUANCE OF THREE HUNDRED FIFTY-FIVE (355) E-PASSPORTS TO PERSONS LIVING IN LONG ISLAND, EIGHT HUNDRED TWENTY-EIGHT (828) E-PASSPORTS TO PERSONS LIVING IN ELEUTHERA, AND FIVE (5) PASSPORTS TO OUR NATIONALS RESIDING IN EXUMA;
- THE RECENT TRANSFER OF AN OFFICER TO THE ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE IN ANDROS, TO ASSIST WITH PASSPORT ISSUANCE. SHE WILL ALSO UTILISE A MOBILE UNIT AS SHE TRAVERSES THE ISLAND OF ANDROS. DURING THE UPCOMING FISCAL PERIOD, WE PLAN TO TAKE THE MOBILE UNITS TO ABACO, BIMINI AND OTHERS OF OUR FAMILY ISLANDS, AS FUNDS PERMIT;
- THE DEPLOYMENT OF MOBILE UNITS IN NASSAU AS WELL, WHICH WE HAVE TAKEN NOT ONLY TO GOVERNMENT OFFICES BUT ALSO TO PRIVATE SECTOR ENTITIES, INCLUDING BANKS;
- UPGRADING SECURITY AT THE PASSPORT OFFICE IN NASSAU, INCLUSIVE OF THE USE OF SWIPE CARDS, A 24-HOUR MONITORING SYSTEM, AND INSTALLATION OF AN ADDITIONAL TELEPHONE LINE TO ALLOW FOR CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS; AND
- IMPROVED DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION TO ENSURE THAT APPLICANTS ARE INFORMED ABOUT THE DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION REQUIRED BY THE PASSPORT OFFICE AT THE TIME OF INTERVIEW, THUS LESSENING THE TURN-AROUND TIME FOR PASSPORT ISSUANCE.

15. INDEED, **MR SPEAKER**, THE TURNAROUND TIME FOR PASSPORT ISSUANCE HAS BEEN REDUCED FROM THREE MONTHS, THE LENGTH OF TIME IT TOOK TO ACQUIRE AN E-PASSPORT INITIALLY, TO THE PRESENT TIME OF THREE (3) WEEKS.

16. **MR SPEAKER**, DURING THE LAST QUARTER OF 2010, WE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR OUR NATIONALS BOTH AT HOME AND AT OUR OVERSEAS MISSIONS, EXCEPT FOR THOSE IN PORT-AU-PRINCE AND IN HAVANA, TO APPLY FOR THEIR E-PASSPORTS ONLINE, AND HAVE THEIR APPOINTMENTS SET UP ON LINE, THEREBY REDUCING THE NUMBER OF HOURS THEY WOULD HAVE HAD TO BE AWAY FROM THEIR WORKPLACE, STANDING IN LONG LINES AT THE PASSPORT OFFICE IN NASSAU (**EPASSPORT.BAHAMAS.GOV.BS**). THIS INITIATIVE, **MR SPEAKER**, WHICH ALSO SEEKS TO MAXIMISE EFFICIENCY, IS USER-FRIENDLY AND HAS PROVEN TO BE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL. IN FACT, **MR SPEAKER**, SINCE THIS SYSTEM WAS IMPLEMENTED IN DECEMBER 2010, ONE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED (1,500) PERSONS HAVE USED IT. ALL THESE MEASURES HAVE RESULTED IN A NOTICEABLE REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC WITH RESPECT TO THE PASSPORT OFFICE.

17. DURING THE COURSE OF THIS BUDGET YEAR (PERHAPS AS EARLY AS SEPTEMBER), WE EXPECT TO BE IN A POSITION TO PROVIDE THE SAME SERVICE AT OUR EMBASSY IN HAVANA, SUBJECT TO THE SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF A NUMBER OF TECHNOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES IN THAT CITY.

18. **MR SPEAKER, WITH RESPECT TO VISAS AND OTHER CONSULAR SERVICES**, THE CONSULAR DIVISION OF THE MINISTRY, WHICH INCLUDES OUR CONSULAR OFFICES OVERSEAS, ALSO PLAYS A ROLE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF OUR BORDERS THROUGH THE ISSUANCE OF VISAS FOR ENTRY INTO OUR ARCHIPELAGO. FROM 1 JULY 2010 TO 30 APRIL 2011, TEN THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED NINETY-NINE (10,899) VISAS WERE ISSUED BY OUR COMBINED CONSULAR OFFICES AND THE CONSULAR DIVISION IN NASSAU. NATIONALS FROM THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES WERE THE MAIN RECIPIENTS OF VISAS: INDIA (2,200); CHINA (1,062); HAITI (492); CUBA (420); SAUDI ARABIA (289); AND THE PHILIPPINES (276).

19. THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF REVENUE GENERATED BY VISA ISSUANCE FOR THIS PERIOD WAS FIVE HUNDRED FIVE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED THIRTY DOLLARS AND NINETY-SIX CENTS (\$505,130.96) THIS REPRESENTS A DECLINE OF SOME ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-THREE DOLLARS AND NINETY-FOUR CENTS (\$100,153.94) FOR THE COMPARABLE TEN-MONTH PERIOD, 1 JULY 2009 TO 30 APRIL 2010.

20. **MR SPEAKER**, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REASONS FOR THIS:

- FIRSTLY, FOLLOWING THE EARTHQUAKE IN HAITI IN JANUARY 2010, VISA ISSUANCE WAS TRANSFERRED FROM OUR EMBASSY IN PORT-AU-PRINCE TO OUR CONSULAR DIVISION IN NASSAU. FURTHER, **MR SPEAKER**, WITH THE OUTBREAK OF CHOLERA IN HAITI AND INCREASED REPORTED CASES OF THE SAME IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, VISA ISSUANCE TO NATIONALS OF THOSE COUNTRIES HAS BEEN RESTRICTED TO CASE-BY-CASE DETERMINATION;

- ADDITIONALLY, **MR SPEAKER**, MY MINISTRY HAS CONTINUED IN ITS EFFORTS TO FACILITATE EASE OF TRAVEL AND BUSINESS FOR NATIONALS FROM A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES, BY REVISING OUR VISA POLICY TO ALLOW THOSE PERSONS TO ENTER THE BAHAMAS FOR UP TO THREE (3) MONTHS WITHOUT A VISA. WE HAVE CONCLUDED VISA WAIVER AGREEMENTS WITH PERU AND BRAZIL WITH RESPECT TO HOLDERS OF DIPLOMATIC AND OFFICIAL PASSPORTS, AND WE ARE PRESENTLY PURSUING VISA WAIVER AGREEMENTS WITH ARGENTINA AND LIECHTENSTEIN. FOLLOWING AN AMENDMENT TO NORWAY'S VISA POLICY, BAHAMIAN VISITORS WILL NO LONGER REQUIRE VISAS FOR TRAVEL TO THAT COUNTRY;
- WITH RESPECT TO CRUISE SHIP PASSENGERS, PERSONS TRAVELLING TO THE BAHAMAS BY CRUISE SHIP WILL NO LONGER REQUIRE A VISA, PROVIDED THEY WILL ALSO BE DEPARTING THE BAHAMAS BY THE SAME CRUISE SHIP. IF, HOWEVER, THEY COME TO THE BAHAMAS BY CRUISE SHIP BUT DEPART BY AIR, AND IF THEY ARE NATIONALS OF COUNTRIES WHICH WOULD NORMALLY REQUIRE VISAS FOR TRAVEL TO THE BAHAMAS, THEN THEY MUST BE IN POSSESSION OF A VALID VISA FOR TRAVEL TO THE BAHAMAS.

21. WHILE OUR REVISED VISA POLICY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ADD TO THE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON REVENUE TO BE DERIVED FROM VISA ISSUANCE JUST DESCRIBED, IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT, IN THIS INSTANCE, IT WILL BE OFFSET BY THE INCREASED NUMBER OF PERSONS WHO ARE EXPECTED TO VISIT THE BAHAMAS, NOW THAT WE HAVE HELPED TO EASE THEIR TRAVEL TO OUR SHORES.

22. **MR SPEAKER**, ONGOING MAINTENANCE OF THE VARIOUS COMPONENTS WHICH CONSTITUTE THE E-PASSPORT AND VISA SYSTEMS IS CRITICAL IF WE ARE TO CONTINUE THE HIGH LEVEL OF ISSUANCE IN AN EXPEDITIOUS MANNER. UNDER BLOCK 50, ITEM 541610, THREE HUNDRED THIRTY-TWO THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED FOURTEEN DOLLARS (\$332,514) HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED FOR THE EXTENSION OF MY MINISTRY'S CONTRACT WITH INDUSA TO COVER, *INTER ALIA*, THE ONGOING MAINTENANCE OF THE SQL SERVER – THE BACKBONE OF THE BORDER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM – FOR A PERIOD OF ONE YEAR. EARLIER THIS YEAR, **MR SPEAKER**, THREE OFFICERS FROM THE MINISTRY UNDERWENT TRAINING ON THE SQL SERVER, WHICH WAS INITIATED BY THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY UNIT (ITU) OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE. DURING THIS CONTRACT PERIOD, IT IS EXPECTED THAT BOTH THE IT STAFF OF THIS MINISTRY, AS WELL AS APPROPRIATE STAFF IN THE IT DEPARTMENT IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE, WILL BE ABLE TO GAIN FURTHER HANDS-ON TRAINING IN THIS CRITICAL AREA.

23. **MR SPEAKER**, ALSO INCLUDED UNDER THIS ITEM IS THE SUM OF TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-FOUR THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED THIRTEEN DOLLARS AND SEVENTEEN CENTS (\$254,613.17), WHICH REPRESENTS PAYMENT FOR THE SYSTEM AND SOFTWARE MAINTENANCE PLAN, INCLUSIVE OF APPROPRIATE LICENCE RENEWALS. RECENT EVENTS IN NEW ZEALAND AND JAPAN SPEAK TO

THE NEED FOR APPROPRIATE BACK-UP OF OUR OPERATING SYSTEM. CONSEQUENTLY, THE AMOUNT OF FOURTEEN THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED NINETY-EIGHT DOLLARS AND FIFTY CENTS (\$14,998.50) HAS BEEN ALLOCATED TO COVER REDUNDANCY, INCLUSIVE OF SERVERS AND COTS SOFTWARE, WHICH WILL BE COVERED FROM OUR CONSULAR PREMISES IN ATLANTA. ANOTHER EIGHTEEN THOUSAND (\$18,000) HAS BEEN INCLUDED FOR THE SAN SERVER WARRANTY, WHICH PROVIDES STORAGE FOR THE SQL SERVER.

#### **THE MINISTRY'S WEBSITE**

24. **MR SPEAKER**, PERMIT ME TO SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT MY MINISTRY'S WEBSITE. MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN IN THE MEDIA ABOUT THE MINISTRY'S FORMER WEBSITE AND OWNERSHIP THEREOF. AT NO ADDITIONAL COST TO THE MINISTRY, BY UTILISING THE TALENTS OF OUR IN-HOUSE I.T. PERSONNEL, AND WITH THE ASSISTANCE FROM THE ITU OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE, WE WERE ABLE TO FORMAT OUR WEBSITE, SO THAT IT IS NOT ONLY MORE COMPREHENSIVE IN TERMS OF ITS CONTENT, BUT IT IS ALSO EASIER TO NAVIGATE. WE HAVE ALSO IDENTIFIED AN OFFICER ALREADY ON STAFF, WHO HAS BEEN ASSIGNED THE TASK OF CONSTANTLY UPDATING THE SITE. OUR WEBSITE ADDRESS IS: **WWW.BAHAMAS.GOV.BS/FOREIGNAFFAIRS**.

25. **MR SPEAKER**, VISA AND PASSPORT ISSUANCE ARE JUST ONE ASPECT OF THE CONSULAR SERVICES PROVIDED BY MY MINISTRY. WE ALSO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO BAHAMIANS IN DISTRESS, AS WAS ABLY DEMONSTRATED BY THE ROLE PLAYED BY OUR FORMER CONSUL-GENERAL IN NEW YORK, CARL SMITH, AND HIS VICE-CONSUL, SANDRA POITIER-MCLAUGHLIN, BOTH OF WHOM WORKED AROUND THE CLOCK TO ASSIST THE NINE (9) BAHAMIAN STRAW VENDORS, WHO WERE DETAINED IN NEW YORK, HAVING BEEN FOUND TO BE IN POSSESSION OF COUNTERFEIT WARES.

#### **DEPORTEES**

26. **MR SPEAKER**, THE PRESS HAS RECENTLY CARRIED REPORTS CONCERNING THE LARGE NUMBER OF PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN DEPORTED FROM THE U.S. BACK TO THE CARIBBEAN OVER THE LAST YEAR. INDEED, THERE HAS BEEN MUCH SPECULATION REGARDING THE POSSIBLE IMPACT THAT THESE DEPORTEES MAY HAVE HAD ON RISING CRIME LEVELS. AS FAR AS THE BAHAMAS IS CONCERNED, **MR SPEAKER**, IN TOTAL, ONE HUNDRED TWO (102) NATIONALS WERE DEPORTED FROM THE U.S. DURING THE PRESENT FISCAL PERIOD. MOST OF THESE PERSONS WOULD HAVE SERVED TIME IN FEDERAL OR STATE PRISONS FOR CRIMES RANGING FROM MURDER, ASSAULT WITH A DEADLY WEAPON AND POSSESSION OF DANGEROUS DRUGS, TO IMMIGRATION VIOLATIONS AND MINOR TRAFFIC OFFENCES. IN FACT, **MR SPEAKER**, APPROXIMATELY 39% OF THE DEPORTEES DURING THIS PERIOD HAD BEEN CONVICTED OF DRUG OFFENCES; ABOUT 33%, OF IMMIGRATION AND TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS; AND 28%, OF VIOLENT CRIMES, INCLUDING MURDER AND ASSAULT WITH A DEADLY WEAPON.

27. RETURNING TO THE WORK OF THE CONSULAR MISSIONS, **MR SPEAKER**, WE HAVE DISCERNED AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF OUR NATIONALS SEEKING ASSISTANCE FROM OUR CONSULAR OFFICES, WHICH SPEAKS, IN PART, TO THE CONFIDENCE WHICH THE GENERAL PUBLIC IS NOW REPOSING IN THOSE

OFFICES, AND THE ABILITY OF OUR OFFICERS TO HELP AS BEST THEY CAN, GIVEN THE LIMITED RESOURCES AT THEIR DISPOSAL.

28. INDEED, **MR SPEAKER**, MUCH CREDIT MUST BE GIVEN TO THE MINISTRY'S FRONT-LINE STAFF WHO PERFORM SO ABLY UNDER NUMEROUS DAILY PRESSURES.

#### **INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

29. **MR SPEAKER**, THE BAHAMAS' MEMBERSHIP IN A NUMBER OF REGIONAL AND MULTILATERAL ORGANISATIONS COMES WITH A HIGH COST. NOT ONLY DO OUR ASSESSED CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SAME CONSTITUTE THE LION'S SHARE OF OUR BUDGET, BUT, **MR SPEAKER**, CHANGES IN OUR ASSESSED CONTRIBUTIONS ARE NOT ALWAYS MADE KNOWN TO US IN SUFFICIENT TIME FOR THEM TO BE INCLUDED IN OUR ANNUAL BUDGET SUBMISSION.

30. ADDITIONALLY, **MR SPEAKER**, EVERY YEAR BRINGS NEW INITIATIVES IN THE AREA OF PEACEKEEPING EXERCISES WHICH COULD NOT HAVE BEEN PREDICTED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BUDGET CYCLE. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE WITH RESPECT TO NEW PEACEKEEPING INITIATIVES BY THE UNITED NATIONS AS WELL AS WITH RESPECT TO FUNDS SOLICITED ON BEHALF OF MEMBER STATES IN THE WAKE OF NATIONAL DISASTERS OR, AS IN THE CASE OF REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS, IN PURSUIT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE. THE AMOUNT OF SIX MILLION THREE HUNDRED NINETY-NINE THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED SIXTY-SEVEN DOLLARS (\$6,399,367) HAS BEEN PROVIDED UNDER THE 50 BLOCK FOR ASSESSED CONTRIBUTIONS OF WHICH WE HAVE BEEN APPRISED.

#### **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

31. **MR SPEAKER**, THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF OUR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE DIVISION, WE HAVE PROVIDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR A NUMBER OF BAHAMIAN NATIONALS (BOTH PUBLIC SERVICE OFFICERS AND STUDENTS), TO FURTHER THEIR TRAINING IN A NUMBER OF DISCIPLINES, AT LITTLE OR NO COST TO THE GOVERNMENT.

32. IN AN EFFORT TO EXPAND AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE MANY OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO THE BAHAMAS, MY MINISTRY SOUGHT ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER MINISTRIES/DEPARTMENTS IN IDENTIFYING THE AREAS OF PRIORITY IN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, TO MEET THE NEEDS OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND THOSE OF THE BAHAMAS AS A WHOLE. A COMPILATION OF THIS DATA IS PRESENTLY BEING PREPARED BY THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE UNIT. THIS LISTING WILL CONTAIN NOT ONLY THE PRIORITY AREAS, BUT, ALSO, A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW OF THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE AFFORDED THE BAHAMAS BY FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS.

33. AS OF TODAY, **MR SPEAKER**, WE HAVE RECEIVED SIXTEEN (16) RESPONSES. OF CRITICAL IMPORT IS THE RESPONSE FROM THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MARINE RESOURCES, AS MANY COUNTRIES ARE WILLING TO PARTNER WITH THE BAHAMAS IN THE AREA OF AGRICULTURAL AND MARINE DEVELOPMENT. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE TANGIBLE BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM TRAINING COURSES, WORKSHOPS,

PROJECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES AIMED AT THE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF OUR ARCHIPELAGIC NATION. GIVEN THE AMOUNT OF OUR ASSESSED CONTRIBUTIONS TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS PREVIOUSLY HIGHLIGHTED, THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE DIVISION IS ONE AREA WHEREBY WE CAN QUANTIFY THE RETURN FROM SUCH INVESTMENTS.

34. ONCE COMPLETED, IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THIS REPORT WILL PROVIDE A GENERAL ANALYSIS OF THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS OF THE BAHAMAS. IT WILL ALSO PROVIDE A TOOL FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS, INCLUDING NEGOTIATIONS WITH COUNTRIES WHICH MAY OFFER ASSISTANCE OUTSIDE THE NORMAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FRAMEWORK.

35. CURRENTLY, THE BAHAMAS RECEIVES, ON AN ANNUAL BASIS, TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FROM SEVENTEEN (17) COUNTRIES AND A NUMBER OF MULTILATERAL/REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS. TWO SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTORS OF SCHOLARSHIPS ARE CHINA AND THE ORGANISATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS).

36. THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA HAS PROVIDED 16 FULL SCHOLARSHIPS TO BAHAMIAN STUDENTS FOR THE 2011/2012 ACADEMIC YEAR. AMONG THAT NUMBER, SIX (6) ARE AVAILABLE FOR NEW APPLICANTS FOR THIS ACADEMIC YEAR AND THE REMAINING TEN (10) ARE FOR PERSONS PRESENTLY ON SCHOLARSHIPS IN CHINA, WHO MAY WISH TO FURTHER THEIR STUDIES.

37. **MR SPEAKER**, THIS YEAR, WE RECEIVED THIRTY-ONE APPLICATIONS FOR THESE CHINESE SCHOLARSHIPS, SIX (6) OF WHICH CAME DIRECTLY FROM OUR EMBASSY IN BEIJING. THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE ABOVE THE SEVEN (7) APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN 2010. THE MINISTRY, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE EMBASSY OF CHINA, HAS ENDEAVOURED TO PROMOTE THIS PROGRAMME THROUGHOUT THE BAHAMAS, AND WE ANTICIPATE EVEN MORE APPLICANTS IN THE FUTURE, THUS UNDERSCORING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BAHAMAS/CHINA RELATIONSHIP.

38. IN ADDITION TO THE SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED, THE GOVERNMENT OF CHINA HAS PROVIDED A SCHEDULE OF 15 SEMINARS AND TRAINING COURSES IN A NUMBER OF AREAS, INCLUDING TOURISM MANAGEMENT, EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURE AND ITS RELATED SCIENCES.

39. **MR SPEAKER**, WITH REGARD TO THE OAS, THAT ORGANISATION HAS PROVIDED EIGHT (8) SCHOLARSHIPS FOR THE 2012-2013 ACADEMIC YEAR, FOR WHICH WE RECEIVED FIFTEEN (15) APPLICATIONS.

#### **BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS**

40. **MR SPEAKER**, TO TURN NOW TO THE SUBSTANTIVE WORK OF THE MINISTRY WITH RESPECT TO BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL MATTERS. I WISH TO HIGHLIGHT SOME OF THE MAJOR INITIATIVES WHICH WILL BE PURSUED BOTH AT HEADQUARTERS AND AT OUR OVERSEAS MISSIONS, OVER THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR.

## **BAHAMAS PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UN, NEW YORK**

41. **MR SPEAKER**, OUR PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS, WHERE 192 COUNTRIES, NUMEROUS INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND MYRIAD NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS ARE REPRESENTED, IS THE BAHAMAS' PORTAL TO THE ENTIRE WORLD AND, INDEED, TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. IT IS THROUGH OUR OUTPOST IN NEW YORK THAT CONTACTS BETWEEN OUR GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES, DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES AND THOSE OF OTHER GOVERNMENTS, WITH WHOM SUCH CONTACTS MIGHT OTHERWISE BE DIFFICULT, ARE FACILITATED. IT IS ALSO THROUGH THIS MISSION THAT THE BAHAMAS HAS BEEN ABLE TO ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES, IN OUR ONGOING QUEST TO STRENGTHEN AND ENHANCE FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD.

42. **MR SPEAKER**, IT IS ALSO THROUGH OUR MISSION IN NEW YORK THAT THE BAHAMAS IS ABLE TO EFFECTIVELY EXERCISE ITS ROLE AS A DYNAMIC AND CONCERNED MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN MATTERS OF GLOBAL PROPORTIONS, SUCH AS CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, LAW OF THE SEA, HUMAN RIGHTS AND MAJOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES SUCH AS THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC, AND, MORE RECENTLY, THE DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACT OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCD'S), *INTER ALIA*. THIS MULTIFACETED ROLE OFTEN NECESSITATES THE ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION OF BAHAMIAN OFFICIALS IN MEETINGS AT THE UNITED NATIONS, TO ARTICULATE THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON THESE PRIORITY AREAS.

43. THE MISSION IS PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE, ALONG WITH ITS CARICOM COUNTERPARTS, IN A NUMBER OF ISSUES CURRENTLY ON THE AGENDA OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING THE UPCOMING HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES AND THE RECENT NEGOTIATIONS AND ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION ON THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE UNITED NATIONS. WE ARE ALSO ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS, WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (AOSIS), IN PREPARATION FOR THE UN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20) IN 2012. AS A RESULT, THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASED LEVEL OF ACTIVITY AND INTEREST IN THE WORK OF THE MISSION. TO BUILD ON THESE ACHIEVEMENTS, WE MUST PROVIDE IT WITH THE NECESSARY RESOURCES TO FUNCTION AT A LEVEL THAT WOULD ENABLE THE COUNTRY TO DERIVE MAXIMUM BENEFITS.

44. SADLY, MR SPEAKER, IN SPITE OF THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF THE MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS, IT IS CURRENTLY STAFFED WITH A MERE THREE (3) DIPLOMATIC OFFICERS, INCLUSIVE OF THE HEAD OF MISSION, A SITUATION WHICH IS UNTENABLE AND MUST BE ADDRESSED AS A MATTER OF PRIORITY. WHILE THE CURRENT STAFF ARE DOING AN OUTSTANDING JOB, MEAGRE RESOURCES NOTWITHSTANDING, THE MAGNITUDE OF THE DEMAND IS SUCH THAT IT CAN ONLY BE MET WITH THE POSTING OF ADDITIONAL DIPLOMATIC OFFICERS TO THAT MISSION. IN ORDER TO REAP GREATER BENEFITS FROM OUR MEMBERSHIP IN AND PRESENCE AT THE UN, WE WILL, THEREFORE, NEED TO EXPAND THE DIPLOMATIC STAFF COMPLEMENT AT OUR PERMANENT MISSION.

45. AS YOU WILL BE AWARE, **MR SPEAKER**, THE BAHAMAS IS CURRENTLY SERVING A THREE (3) YEAR TERM AS A MEMBER OF THE UNITED NATIONS' ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC) FOR THE PERIOD 2010-2012. THIS YEAR, THE REGULAR SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE ECOSOC WILL BE HELD IN GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, DURING THE MONTH OF JULY, WHICH WILL NECESSITATE THE TEMPORARY RELOCATION OF THREE OFFICERS FROM THE PERMANENT MISSION IN NEW YORK TO GENEVA DURING THIS PERIOD. CONSEQUENTLY, THE MISSION'S ALLOCATION FOR TRAVEL, WHICH IS INCLUDED UNDER ITEM 102100 (TRANSPORTATION FOR PERSONS OUTSIDE THE BAHAMAS), HAS BEEN INCREASED BY \$9,000. HAND IN HAND WITH THIS IS AN INCREASE OF \$32,000 IN THE ALLOCATION OF MONIES UNDER ITEM 102200 (SUBSISTENCE FOR TRAVELLERS OUTSIDE THE BAHAMAS) TO COVER LIVING ACCOMMODATION AND SUBSISTENCE COSTS IN GENEVA FOR THESE OFFICERS.

46. **MR SPEAKER**, ANOTHER CRUCIAL, SERVICE-RELATED ITEM IS ONE CONCERNING THE MAINTENANCE OF THE BUILDING BAHAMAS HOUSE, WHICH HOUSES THE MISSION, AS WELL AS THE CONSULATE AND THE BAHAMAS MARITIME AUTHORITY. THIS BUILDING, WHICH WAS PURCHASED IN 1991, HAS SERVED US WELL, BUT, AS WITH ANY STRUCTURE, IT MUST BE PROPERLY MAINTAINED, IF IT IS TO CONTINUE TO SERVE THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH IT IS INTENDED. CRITICAL TO THIS EXERCISE IS THE REGULAR INSPECTION AND ASSESSMENT OF THE INTEGRITY OF THE BUILDING BY A QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL. THE PROVISION OF ADEQUATE MONIES FOR THE DAY-TO-DAY MAINTENANCE AND GENERAL UPKEEP OF THE BUILDING, INCLUDING ONGOING SMALL PROJECTS AND THE REPAIR AND/OR REPLACEMENT OF KEY EQUIPMENT, AS WELL AS FOR ITS PROPER INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION, IS THE ONLY WAY TO ENSURE THAT THE INITIAL INVESTMENT CONTINUES TO BE A GOOD AND PROFITABLE ONE.

#### **BAHAMAS EMBASSY/PERMANENT MISSION, WASHINGTON, DC**

47. **MR SPEAKER**, OUR OFFICE IN WASHINGTON, DC, IS A MULTIFUNCTIONAL DIPLOMATIC MISSION, WHICH SERVES AS THE BAHAMAS EMBASSY TO THE UNITED STATES, COLOMBIA AND MEXICO, AS WELL AS THE BAHAMAS PERMANENT MISSION TO THE ORGANISATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS). THE MISSION, AS A RESULT, HAS A VERY WIDE REMIT, WHICH INCLUDES BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE COUNTRIES TO WHICH IT IS ACCREDITED, REPRESENTATION IN THE VARIOUS MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE OAS, AND CONSULAR ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING THE ISSUANCE OF VISAS AND PASSPORTS AND ASSISTANCE TO BAHAMIAN NATIONALS.

48. **MR SPEAKER**, THE EFFECTIVE EXECUTION OF THE BAHAMAS' FOREIGN POLICY ABROAD REQUIRES THAT THE REQUISITE STAFFING COMPLEMENT AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES BE IN PLACE AT OUR VARIOUS MISSIONS. FOR FISCAL 2011/2012, THE EMBASSY BUDGET ALLOCATION IS PROPOSED AT \$1,098,400, REPRESENTING A REDUCTION OF \$7,740, WHEN COMPARED TO THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL 2010/2011.

49. THE MISSION COMPRISES SEVEN (7) DIPLOMATS AND EIGHT (8) ADMINISTRATIVE/CLERICAL AND SUPPORT STAFF. THE BUDGET INCLUDES

PROVISIONS FOR THE ONGOING WORK OF THE MISSION, STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND IMPORTANT CAPITAL OUTLAYS. ALLOCATIONS HAVE ALSO BEEN MADE TO ENSURE THAT THE EMBASSY STAFF HAVE THE NECESSARY TOOLS TO EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY CARRY OUT THEIR WORK RESPONSIBILITIES, AND TO BETTER ALIGN THEIR TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES TO THOSE IN PLACE IN OTHER OVERSEAS MISSIONS.

50. **MR SPEAKER**, OUR EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, DC CARRIES OUT THE MINISTRY'S FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES WITH RESPECT TO THE BAHAMAS' RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR CLOSEST NEIGHBOUR AND STRONGEST ECONOMIC PARTNER – THE UNITED STATES. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY STRONG AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL OVER THE YEARS, AND MY MINISTRY HAS MANDATED THE EMBASSY TO DEEPEN THAT RELATIONSHIP THROUGH ENGAGEMENT WITH THE U.S. EXECUTIVE AND ADMINISTRATION ON MATTERS RELATED TO OUR FINANCIAL SERVICES INDUSTRY, THE BAHAMAS' COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY, THE CARIBBEAN BASIN INITIATIVE (CBI) AND OTHER MATTERS OF NATIONAL SECURITY.

51. **MR SPEAKER**, THE BAHAMAS WILL ALSO SEEK TO ENGAGE IN A GREATER EXPLORATION OF PARTNERSHIP AND CO-OPERATION ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY, IN AREAS RELATED TO TRADE, TOURISM, RENEWABLE ENERGY, EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND COMPETITIVENESS.

52. **MR SPEAKER**, AS WITH ALL OF THE BAHAMAS' DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS, THE EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, DC, ALSO ENGAGES IN CULTURAL AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY, PARTICIPATING IN PROGRAMMES WHICH REQUIRE A LIMITED FINANCIAL COMMITMENT, BUT WHICH CAN MAKE AN INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO RAISING THE PROFILE OF THE COUNTRY AND PROMOTING THE BAHAMAS AS A BUSINESS, TOURIST AND CULTURAL DESTINATION. CLOSELY WORKING WITH THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM, THE EMBASSY PARTICIPATES IN THE "PASSPORT DC OPEN HOUSE", WHICH EXPOSES THOUSANDS OF GUESTS TO THE CULTURE OF THE BAHAMAS. THE EMBASSY ALSO PARTICIPATES IN THE EMBASSY ADOPTION PROGRAMME.

53. **MR SPEAKER**, I NOW WISH TO TURN TO THE WORK OF THE WASHINGTON OFFICE AT THE OAS. MENTION MUST FIRST BE MADE OF THE BAHAMAS' OAS ANNUAL QUOTA PAYMENT. FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, MY MINISTRY HAS BENEFITED FROM THE OAS' PROMPT QUOTA PAYMENT DISCOUNT, BECAUSE OF THE EFFICIENCY OF ITS OPERATIONS RELATED TO THE PAYMENT OF ITS ANNUAL QUOTA IN FULL BY THE JANUARY DEADLINE. THE DISCOUNT POLICY IS BEING REVISED; HOWEVER, THE REVISION IS NOT EXPECTED TO AFFECT THE BAHAMAS' SAVINGS, PROVIDED THE PAYMENT CONTINUES TO BE MADE BY JANUARY IN EACH YEAR.

54. THE BAHAMAS HAS CONTINUED TO DEMONSTRATE ITS LEADERSHIP ABILITY AND ITS COMMITMENT TO THE OAS DURING 2010/2011. WE CONTINUE TO SERVE AS VICE-CHAIR OF THE OAS COMMITTEE ON BUDGETARY AFFAIRS (CAAP) AND, AS SUCH, HAVE PLAYED AN INSTRUMENTAL ROLE IN RESHAPING

REFORM EFFORTS AT THE OAS TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ORGANISATION.

55. AN IMPORTANT EFFORT UNDERWAY AT THE CAAP IS THE REVISION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES TO IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY IN THE HIRING PROCESS, SO THAT QUALIFIED NATIONALS OF MEMBER STATES WILL HAVE A GREATER OPPORTUNITY TO PUT THEIR TALENTS TO WORK AT THE OAS. WE HAVE GIVEN OUR WASHINGTON MISSION AN IMPORTANT MANDATE TO ENSURE GREATER GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION AT THE OAS.

56. **MR SPEAKER**, THE CAAP HAS ALSO UNDERTAKEN A REVIEW TO DETERMINE THE PRIORITIES OF MEMBER STATES WITH RESPECT TO THE FUNDING OF THE OAS' REGULAR BUDGET. KEY ON THE MINISTRY'S PRIORITIES WERE AREAS RELATED TO DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, TOURISM AND PUBLIC SECURITY.

57. LASTLY ON THIS POINT, **MR SPEAKER**, MY MINISTRY HAS MANDATED THE WASHINGTON OFFICE TO ENSURE THAT THE OAS BE MORE TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ITS FINANCIAL RESOURCES. AS SUCH, THE MISSION, THROUGH THE CAAP, HAS PURSUED A NUMBER OF INITIATIVES IN THIS REGARD.

58. **MR SPEAKER**, MY MINISTRY HAS ALSO MANDATED THE BAHAMAS OAS MISSION TO VIGOROUSLY PURSUE AND PROTECT INITIATIVES RELATED TO INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE OAS. IN JUNE 2010, THE BAHAMAS WAS ELECTED TO THE MANAGEMENT BOARD OF THE INTER-AMERICAN AGENCY FOR CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT – AN ORGAN OF THE OAS WHICH PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN OVERSEEING THE ORGANISATION'S CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES. THE BAHAMAS IS ALSO THE IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR OF THE PERMANENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT (CEPCIDI), AND IN THIS CAPACITY, THE HEAD OF MISSION HAS ADDRESSED VARIOUS FORA ON TOPICS RELATED TO "CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT", AND JUST RECENTLY, ON "CITIZEN SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT". THE MISSION HAS ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED IN THE REFORM AGENDA FOR INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT.

59. ADDITIONALLY, **MR SPEAKER**, THE MISSION REMAINS ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN OAS DISCUSSIONS ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HEMISPHERE AND THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS.

60. **MR SPEAKER**, IN KEEPING WITH THE BAHAMAS' ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE OAS, THIS YEAR'S BUDGET INCLUDES ALLOCATIONS FOR THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS/CONFERENCES: THE OAS TRAVEL CONGRESS TO BE HELD IN SEPTEMBER 2011; MEETINGS OF THE SUMMIT IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW GROUP (SIRG); AND THE VI SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS, TO BE HELD IN COLOMBIA IN LATE APRIL 2012. PROVISION HAS ALSO BEEN MADE FOR MISSION STAFF TO PARTICIPATE IN THE AMERICAS COMPETITIVE FORUM AND THE MEETING OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMPETITIVENESS NETWORK (RIAC) TO BE HELD IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC IN LATE 2011.

61. **MR SPEAKER**, IN TERMS OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AND REPAIRS, MY MINISTRY'S BUDGET INCLUDES PROVISIONS FOR THE EMBASSY, IN THE COMING YEAR, TO CONTINUE ITS BUILDING REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE PLAN COMMENCED IN 2010. THE WORK CONSISTS OF REPAIRS TO THE ELECTRICAL SYSTEM, MINOR MOULD REMEDIATION, LIGHT RENOVATION OF THE RECEPTION AND CONFERENCE AREAS, REPLACEMENT OF OLD FURNISHINGS AND FIXTURES, EXTERIOR PAINTING OF THE EMBASSY AND THE BEAUTIFICATION OF THE PREMISES OF BOTH THE CHANCERY AND THE OFFICIAL RESIDENCE.

62. ALSO INCLUDED, **MR SPEAKER**, ARE ALLOCATIONS TO ALLOW THE EMBASSY TO IMPROVE THE SECURITY OF ITS NETWORKS AND PERSONAL COMPUTERS, UPGRADE ITS PRODUCTIVITY SOFTWARE TO MAXIMISE EFFICIENCY, AND MAKE BETTER USE OF SCANNING EQUIPMENT AS A MEANS TO REDUCE THE EMBASSY'S FAXING COSTS.

63. FINALLY, **MR SPEAKER**, TO ENSURE THAT THE INTERESTS AND ASSETS OF THE BAHAMAS GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARE FULLY PROTECTED, THE EMBASSY ALSO PLANS TO UNDERTAKE A COMPREHENSIVE RISK-MANAGEMENT REVIEW TO ENSURE THAT ALL FORESEEABLE RISKS ARE ADEQUATELY COVERED BY ITS INSURANCE CONTRACTS AND OTHER CONTINGENCY PLANS.

#### **BAHAMAS HIGH COMMISSION, LONDON**

64. **MR SPEAKER**, OUR HIGH COMMISSION IN LONDON PERFORMS A KEY FUNCTION IN THAT IT IS THE FOCAL POINT FOR BAHAMIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN EUROPE. THE DEMANDS OF THIS OFFICE, STAFFED BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER, TWO (2) FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS, AND A SMALL NUMBER OF LOCALLY-ENGAGED STAFF, ARE GREAT, PARTICULARLY IN THIS TIME OF FISCAL CONSTRAINT. HOWEVER, THE HIGH COMMISSION IS DETERMINED TO CONTINUE TO PROMOTE, SUSTAIN AND DEVELOP THE BAHAMAS' INTERESTS IN EUROPE, THROUGH PRIORITISED ACTIVITIES IN EVERY AREA OF ITS RESPONSIBILITIES.

65. **MR SPEAKER**, OUR LONDON OFFICE WILL CONTINUE ITS ENGAGEMENT WITH THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS TO WHICH IT IS ACCREDITED, INCLUDING THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT AND THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION. IT WILL PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING, SCHEDULED TO BE HELD IN PERTH, AUSTRALIA FROM 28<sup>TH</sup> TO 30<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2011, AS WELL AS CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY SUPPORT TO RELEVANT GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES FOR PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS IN EUROPE OVER THE COMING YEAR.

66. **MR SPEAKER**, THE HIGH COMMISSION IS ALSO CHARGED WITH OVERSEEING THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE BAHAMAS' RE-ELECTION TO THE COUNCIL OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION (IMO), ELECTIONS FOR WHICH WILL BE HELD IN LONDON IN NOVEMBER OF THIS YEAR. THE BAHAMAS MAINTAINS ONE OF THE LARGEST SHIP REGISTRIES IN THE WORLD, AND AN ONGOING PRESENCE ON THE IMO COUNCIL WILL ENSURE THAT WE CAN CONTINUE TO MAKE OUR CONSTRUCTIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMO GOALS OF

SAFE, ECONOMICAL TRANSPORT AND PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT.

67. THE HIGH COMMISSION IS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE DAY-TO-DAY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE BAHAMAS AND: THE EUROPEAN UNION, AND THE AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC GROUP OF STATES (ACP); THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM); AND, FOR THE TIME BEING, THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION (WTO). IT MAY ALSO BE CALLED UPON TO ASSIST, AS NEEDED, WITH THE UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE IN OCTOBER 2011.

68. **MR SPEAKER**, OUR HIGH COMMISSION WILL CONTINUE ITS ACTIVE BILATERAL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GOVERNMENTS OF BELGIUM, FRANCE, GERMANY, ITALY, GREECE AND THE UNITED KINGDOM, TO WHOM IT IS ACCREDITED. THE HIGH COMMISSION LIAISES WITH, AND PROVIDES ASSISTANCE TO, THE GROWING NETWORK OF BAHAMAS HONORARY CONSULS IN EUROPE. IN THIS REGARD, THIS GROUP HAS RECENTLY BEEN ENHANCED BY THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW HONORARY CONSUL IN OSLO, NORWAY.

69. THE BAHAMIAN COMMUNITY IN EUROPE WILL CONTINUE TO BE AFFORDED EFFICIENT CONSULAR SERVICES, AND THE MISSION WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE ADVICE ON EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION MATTERS, AND DISSEMINATE GENERAL INFORMATION TO HELP BAHAMIANS IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES, SUCH AS DETENTION AT FOREIGN BORDERS, ASSISTING BAHAMIAN FAMILIES IN THE HOSPITALISATION OR PASSING OF THEIR LOVED ONES ABROAD, REPATRIATIONS, AND MORAL SUPPORT. THE MISSION WILL CONTINUE WITH ITS OUTREACH TO BAHAMIAN NATIONALS; IN PARTICULAR, TO STUDENTS, TO SUPPORT THEM DURING THEIR TIME AWAY FROM HOME.

70. **MR SPEAKER**, IN 2012, THE EYES OF THE WORLD WILL BE CENTRED ON LONDON, AND OUR HIGH COMMISSION WILL SERVE AS A FOCAL POINT FOR BAHAMIANS DURING THIS TIME. IN JUNE 2012, HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II WILL CELEBRATE HER DIAMOND JUBILEE. THIS IS TO BE FOLLOWED CLOSELY BY THE SUMMER OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES. CONSEQUENTLY, THE HIGH COMMISSION ANTICIPATES THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN ITS CONSULAR ACTIVITIES SIGNIFICANTLY IN 2012.

71. THE PROTOCOL DEMANDS IN LONDON WOULD ALSO BE GREAT IN 2011/2012. NORMALLY, THE HIGH COMMISSION IS CALLED UPON TO RENDER ASSISTANCE TO MINISTERS AND SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS VISITING OR TRANSITING LONDON. SINCE THE UK GOVERNMENT INTRODUCED FEES FOR THE USE OF VIP LOUNGES AT UK AIRPORTS, THIS HAS, AND CONTINUES TO BE, AN EXPENSIVE UNDERTAKING FOR OUR HIGH COMMISSION. SOME PROVISION HAS BEEN MADE FOR THIS IN THE MISSION'S BUDGET. HOWEVER, THE BULK WOULD HAVE TO BE MET FROM LINE MINISTRIES THROUGH REIMBURSEMENT FOR COSTS INCURRED.

72. **MR SPEAKER**, IT WOULD BE KNOWN THAT THE BAHAMAS GOVERNMENT OWNS TWO DISTINGUISHED FREEHOLD PROPERTIES IN THE PRIME LOCATION OF MAYFAIR, WHICH HOUSE THE HIGH COMMISSION'S CHANCERY AND OFFICIAL

RESIDENCE. THESE PROPERTIES ARE OF SIGNIFICANT VALUE AND SHOULD BE MAINTAINED TO THE STANDARDS AND LEVELS REQUIRED, NOT ONLY BY THE UK GOVERNMENT FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY AND HISTORIC REASONS, BUT, ALSO, TO PROTECT OUR GOVERNMENT'S INVESTMENT.

73. **MR SPEAKER**, IN 2010, THE HIGH COMMISSION ENGAGED THE SERVICES OF A PROFESSIONAL STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING FIRM TO CONDUCT A SURVEY OF BOTH PROPERTIES. THESE REPORTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED AND THEY HIGHLIGHT KEY REMEDIAL WORK THAT NEEDS TO BE UNDERTAKEN. THE TOTAL ESTIMATED COST OF THIS WORK IS IN EXCESS OF 170,000 POUNDS PLUS VAT OF 20%. THIS FIGURE DOES NOT INCLUDE THE COSTS OF RELOCATION OF OFFICES AND THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S HOUSEHOLD DURING THE PROPOSED WORK.

74. THE REPORTS SUGGEST THAT, IF THE WORK IS NOT DONE IN THE NEAR FUTURE, WE WOULD RUN THE RISK OF HAVING TO EXPEND EVEN MORE FUNDS SHOULD THE CONDITION OF THE BUILDINGS WORSEN OVER TIME. THE REPORTS AND QUOTATIONS ARE BEING STUDIED BY THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS, AND IT IS HOPED THAT AGENCY WOULD BE ABLE TO DISPATCH AN OFFICER TO LONDON TO REVIEW FIRSTHAND THE STATE OF THE BUILDINGS, IN ORDER TO MAKE AN EVALUATION OF THE WORK REQUIRED.

#### **BAHAMAS HIGH COMMISSION, OTTAWA**

75. **MR SPEAKER**, AT THE START OF FISCAL 2011/2012, OUR HIGH COMMISSION IN OTTAWA WILL UNDERGO A CHANGE IN PERSONNEL, AS THE PRESENT DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER, MRS IRENE STUBBS, WHO HAS SERVED WELL FOR THREE YEARS, COMES TO THE END OF HER ASSIGNMENT. MRS DONNA LOWE, WHO PRESENTLY HEADS THE LEGAL AFFAIRS DIVISION IN THE MINISTRY, WILL BE OUT-POSTED TO OTTAWA AS COUNSELLOR/CONSUL.

76. THE HIGH COMMISSION IN OTTAWA CONTINUES ITS EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CANADIAN DEPARTMENT OF TRADE, HOLDING SEVERAL MEETINGS WITH SENIOR PERSONNEL IN THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE, TO NOURISH THE CONTINUATION OF DIRECT FOREIGN INVESTMENT. INDEED, **MR SPEAKER**, THE BAHAMAS IS CURRENTLY RANKED TENTH (10<sup>TH</sup>) AMONG COUNTRY INVESTMENT RECIPIENTS, HAVING NETTED \$11.7 BILLION DOLLARS IN FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI), ACCORDING TO THE MOST RECENT REPORT BY CANADA'S OFFICE OF TRADE.

77. EARLIER THIS YEAR, THE MISSION PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN FACILITATING THE VISIT OF AN INVESTMENT TEAM TO CALGARY AND TORONTO, LED BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER, WHO ALSO PARTICIPATED IN THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK.

78. **MR SPEAKER**, MENTION SHOULD ALSO BE MADE OF THE DISCONTINUANCE OF THE MEDICAL REQUIREMENT FOR BAHAMIAN STUDENTS WISHING TO STUDY IN CANADA, WHICH CREATED SERIOUS DELAYS IN THE PROCESSING OF THEIR CANADIAN VISA APPLICATIONS. WE ARE CONVINCED

THAT THE LOBBYING EFFORTS OF BOTH OUR OTTAWA MISSION AND HEADQUARTERS HELPED TO BRING THIS MATTER TO A SATISFACTORY CONCLUSION.

**BAHAMAS EMBASSY, BEIJING**

79. **MR SPEAKER**, THIS YEAR MARKS THE COMPLETION OF A FULL THREE-YEAR POSTING FOR ALL OFFICERS AT OUR EMBASSY IN BEIJING, ALL OF WHOSE SERVICES HAVE BEEN EXTENDED FOR A FURTHER YEAR. THE REPORTS AND INSIGHTS THE EMBASSY HAS PROVIDED HAVE GREATLY FACILITATED THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES TOWARDS THE ASIA/PACIFIC REGION.

80. **MR SPEAKER**, THE PAST THREE YEARS HAVE WITNESSED THE STRENGTHENING OF TIES WITH CHINA AS THE EMBASSY COORDINATED HIGH-LEVEL VISITS TO THE BAHAMAS, INCLUDING VISITS BY VICE-PREMIER HUI LIANGYU, CHAIRMAN WU BANGGUO OF THE NPC, YIKANG JIANG OF THE CCCPC, AND VICE-FOREIGN MINISTER LI JIN ZHANG FOR THE CHINA/CARIBBEAN CONSULTATION. THE VISIT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS DELEGATION, AND THE VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE, BOTH IN OCTOBER 2010, WERE EQUALLY OF GREAT IMPORT.

81. **MR SPEAKER**, OUR EMBASSY IN BEIJING IS THE ONLY BAHAMIAN OFFICE IN THE ASIA/PACIFIC REGION. NOT ONLY IS IT RESPONSIBLE FOR CHINA, BUT ALSO FOR THE ENTIRE ASIA/PACIFIC REGION. AMBASSADOR CAMPBELL HAS RECENTLY PRESENTED CREDENTIALS IN SINGAPORE AND THE PHILIPPINES AND DURING THE COURSE OF THIS FISCAL YEAR, IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT SHE WILL PRESENT CREDENTIALS IN SOUTH KOREA, INDONESIA, AND BANGLADESH, AND THAT AMBASSADOR SHEILA CAREY WILL PRESENT HER CREDENTIALS IN MALAYSIA. OFFICERS WILL SEEK TO ESTABLISH THE PRACTICE OF ANNUAL VISITS TO EACH JURISDICTION IN EXECUTION OF THE EMBASSY/HIGH COMMISSION'S DUTIES.

82. THE EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO PROMOTE THE BAHAMAS, TO ASSIST THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM IN ITS TOURISM PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES, AND TO PROVIDE CONSULAR SUPPORT TO BAHAMIAN NATIONALS AND OTHER CONSULAR SERVICES. THE EMBASSY ALSO ANTICIPATES TURNING ITS FOCUS ON PREPARATIONS FOR THE THIRD CHINA-CARIBBEAN ECONOMIC AND TRADE FORUM, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO BE HELD IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO IN THE FALL OF THIS YEAR. AS THE NAME SUGGESTS, THE FORUM WILL PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES TO MEET WITH SENIOR CHINESE OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS TRADE AND ECONOMIC ISSUES OF CONCERN TO THE REGION.

83. IN ADDITION, THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN GROUP OF AMBASSADORS IN BEIJING IS REVIEWING A REQUEST FROM THE CHINESE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE THAT THE REGION PARTICIPATE IN THE CANTON FAIR, TO BE HELD IN OCTOBER. THIS FAIR IS ONE OF THE LARGEST IN CHINA AND IS AN IMPORTANT VENUE FOR THE PROMOTION OF CHINESE EXPORTS AND PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR FOREIGN COMPANIES TO IDENTIFY JOINT VENTURE OR OTHER PARTNERS IN THE CHINESE MARKET. THE PROPOSAL FOR

THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN GROUP (GRULAC) INCLUDES AN EXHIBITION BY REGIONAL PRODUCERS OF AGRO-INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS, AND VARIOUS SEMINARS AND MEETINGS. IF AGREEMENT IS REACHED ON REGIONAL PARTICIPATION, IT WOULD FALL TO THE GRULAC EMBASSIES IN BEIJING TO CO-ORDINATE THIS EVENT.

84. **MR SPEAKER**, THE EMBASSY IS ALSO EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITY OF PARTICIPATING IN THE ANNUAL CHINA INTERNATIONAL FAIR FOR INVESTMENT AND TRADE (CIFIT), WHICH WILL BE HELD IN XIAMEN FROM 8<sup>TH</sup> TO 11<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER OF THIS YEAR. CIFIT IS CHINA'S ONLY INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT PROMOTION EVENT AIMED AT FACILITATING BILATERAL INVESTMENT.

85. AS CHOGM WILL BE HELD IN AUSTRALIA IN OCTOBER OF THIS YEAR, AS INDICATED EARLIER, IT IS EXPECTED THAT OUR EMBASSY IN BEIJING MAY BE CALLED UPON TO ASSIST THE BAHAMAS DELEGATION.

#### **LEGAL AFFAIRS DIVISION**

86. **MR SPEAKER**, THE LEGAL AFFAIRS DIVISION OF THE MINISTRY HAS A SMALL CADRE OF OFFICERS AND, UNTIL TWO (2) YEARS AGO, FUNCTIONED WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF IN-HOUSE LEGAL EXPERTISE. WITH THE INVALUABLE ADDITION OF AN ATTORNEY SECONDED FROM THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL, OUR LEGAL AFFAIRS DIVISION TOOK ACTION ON A NUMBER OF TREATIES TO WHICH GOVERNMENT APPROVED FOR THE BAHAMAS TO BECOME PARTY:

- THE PROTOCOL TO THE CARICOM TREATY ON SOCIAL SECURITY;
- THE CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION (CARTAGENA CONVENTION);
- THE PROTOCOL CONCERNING CO-OPERATION IN COMBATING OIL SPILLS IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION; AND
- THE PROTOCOL CONCERNING POLLUTION FROM LAND-BASED SOURCES AND ACTIVITIES TO THE CARTAGENA CONVENTION.

87. **MR SPEAKER**, THE DIVISION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING THE REGISTER OF TREATIES TO WHICH THE BAHAMAS IS PARTY, AND THIS INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON THE MINISTRY'S WEBSITE WHICH IS HOSTED ON THE GOVERNMENT'S MAIN PORTAL: **WWW.BAHAMAS.GOV.BS**.

88. **MR SPEAKER**, THE DIVISION HAS ALSO COMPLETED WORK GIVING EFFECT TO UN SECURITY COUNCIL SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAN, NORTH KOREA, AND THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CONGO, AMONG OTHERS, AND IS WORKING WITH THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL TO FINALISE SANCTIONS AGAINST LIBYA AND THE IVORY COAST.

89. **MR SPEAKER**, WITH RESPECT TO OUR OBLIGATIONS ON THE ISSUE OF THE PREVENTION OF THE FINANCING OF TERRORISM, THE BAHAMAS HAS SUBMITTED FIVE REPORTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UN SECURITY COUNCIL ANTI-TERRORISM RESOLUTION 1373 SINCE 2001. THESE REPORTS UPDATE THE UN COUNTERTERRORISM COMMITTEE ON THE BAHAMAS' ACTIONS IN THIS REGARD. EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION 1373 IS ONE OF THE CRITERIA USED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN DETERMINING THE QUALITY OF INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL CENTRES.

90. **MR SPEAKER**, YOU WILL BE AWARE FROM MEDIA ACCOUNTS THAT INCIDENTS OF PIRACY HAVE INCREASED; HENCE, THE NEED FOR THE BAHAMAS, AS ONE OF THE LARGEST FLEETS IN THE WORLD, TO WORK ALONG WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO ESTABLISH COUNTER-MEASURES TO PROTECT INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING. IT HAS GENERALLY BEEN RECOGNISED THAT THE LONG-TERM SOLUTION IS STABILITY IN SOMALIA. HOWEVER, SHORT- TO MEDIUM-TERM ACTION IS ALSO REQUIRED, AND THE BAHAMAS IS PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROCESS.

91. **MR SPEAKER**, THE DIVISION HAS ALSO BEEN ACTIVELY OCCUPIED IN ITS CAPACITY AS LIAISON BETWEEN THE US EMBASSY IN NASSAU AND SUBSTANTIVE MINISTRIES, WITH RESPECT TO THE ANNUAL REPORTS PREPARED BY THAT EMBASSY, ON SUCH SUBJECTS AS HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING. IN THIS LATTER REGARD, THE DIVISION PARTICIPATED IN A WORKSHOP ORGANISED BY THE US EMBASSY.

92. **MR SPEAKER**, THE DIVISION HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR COORDINATING THE PLANNING OF MEETINGS, BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS IN THE BAHAMAS AND US OFFICIALS, FOR A TABLETOP EXERCISE (TTX) TO TEST THE RESPONSE PROTOCOL PERTINENT TO THE MEGAPORTS EQUIPMENT, WHICH IS STATIONED AT THE FREEPORT CONTAINER PORT, TO DETECT RADIOLOGICAL AND OTHER DANGEROUS MATERIALS WHICH MIGHT BE IN THE CONTAINERS. THE BAHAMAS WAS ONE OF THE FIRST COUNTRIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROGRAMME WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES, AND OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE SOUGHT ADVICE ON OUR EXPERIENCE IN THIS REGARD. THE PROGRAMME IS IMPORTANT TO THE FREEPORT CONTAINER PORT, GIVEN ITS PROFILE AS A WORLD RENOWNED TRANSHIPMENT PORT.

93. **MR SPEAKER**, THE DIVISION ALSO COORDINATED FORMAL TALKS, AT THE TECHNICAL LEVEL, WITH THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT IN SEPTEMBER 2010, IN WHICH MEMBERS OF THE BAHAMAS' DELIMITATION COMMITTEE, ALONG WITH OUR AMBASSADOR TO CUBA, PARTICIPATED ON THE DRAFT AGREEMENT ON THE DELIMITATION OF OUR MARITIME BOUNDARIES WITH THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA. WORK ALSO CONTINUES WITH RESPECT TO OUR OTHER NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES.

94. **MR SPEAKER**, THE LEGAL AFFAIRS DIVISION IS DEALING WITH A PROLIFERATION OF CHILD ABDUCTION CASES, WHICH IS UNPRECEDENTED. THESE CASES ARE PARTICULARLY CHALLENGING, INVOLVING AS THEY DO THE FATE OF MINORS WHO HAVE LITTLE OR NO SAY ABOUT THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES. AS WITH SO MANY CHALLENGES FACED BY THE BAHAMAS, ADDITIONAL

RESOURCES ARE NEEDED TO ENSURE THAT THE MINISTRY PERFORM ITS ROLE AS COMPETENT AUTHORITY UNDER THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION THAT GOVERNS THESE CASES.

#### **MULTILATERAL RELATIONS/ORGANISATIONS (POLITICAL) DIVISION**

95. **MR SPEAKER,** THE MULTILATERAL RELATIONS/ORGANISATIONS (POLITICAL) DIVISION CONTRIBUTES TO THE FORMULATION AND CO-ORDINATION OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE BAHAMAS. THE DIVISION CLOSELY MONITORS INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND PROVIDES ADVICE ON THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION IN THE INTEREST OF THE BAHAMAS.

96. SUPPORTED BY THE TECHNICAL BRIEFING OF THE DIVISION THROUGH ITS CO-ORDINATION ROLE, I HAD THE PRIVILEGE TO PARTICIPATE AGAIN AT THE UNITED NATIONS IN ITS SIXTY-FIFTH (65<sup>TH</sup>) GENERAL ASSEMBLY (UNGA). CARICOM REPRESENTATIVES AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY WERE ABLE TO GIVE FURTHER POLITICAL WEIGHT TO THE STATED HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCD'S), SLATED FOR SEPTEMBER OF THIS YEAR, WHICH IS A CARICOM INITIATIVE.

97. I WAS ALSO ABLE TO MEET IN THE MARGINS OF THE UNGA WITH FOREIGN MINISTERS OF CARICOM AND FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH, ON ISSUES OF COMMON INTEREST, AS WELL AS HOLD BILATERAL MEETINGS WITH SEVERAL COUNTERPARTS, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, BAHRAIN, MEXICO, ARGENTINA AND CANADA. IN THIS REGARD, I CONCLUDED A JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH BAHRAIN. I ALSO FURTHER PURSUED, WITH MEXICO AND ARGENTINA, THE OUTSTANDING ISSUE AS TO WHY THE BAHAMAS WAS STILL ON THEIR "GREY LIST", HAVING SIGNED THE REQUISITE NUMBER OF TAX INFORMATION EXCHANGE AGREEMENTS (TIEA'S) AND, THEREFORE, REQUESTED REMOVAL FROM THE SAME.

98. **MR SPEAKER,** AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE WORK OF THE MULTILATERAL RELATIONS DIVISION ALSO ENTAILS THE REGULAR UPDATING AND MAINTENANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CANDIDATURES GRID. AS STATES SEEK ELECTION TO VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL BODIES, THEY OFTEN SOLICIT THE SUPPORT OF THE BAHAMAS, AS WELL AS THAT OF OTHER STATES. THE SAME IS TRUE FOR THE BAHAMAS IN RESPECT OF OUR CANDIDACIES. IT WILL BE RECALLED, **MR SPEAKER,** THAT THE BAHAMAS IS SERVING FOR THE PERIOD 2010-2011 AS A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION (IMO), AND FOR THE PERIOD 2010-2012 AS A MEMBER OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC) OF THE UNITED NATIONS. IN THE FORTHCOMING MONTHS, THE BAHAMAS WILL BE HEIGHTENING AN INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR ITS CANDIDATURES FOR RE-ELECTION TO THE IMO, AND FOR ELECTION TO A POSITION ON THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (CCPCJ).

99. THE BAHAMAS HAS A STRONG INTEREST IN GAINING MEMBERSHIP ON VARIOUS BODIES, AS MEMBERSHIP OFTEN OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO VOICE NATIONAL CONCERNS AND PRIORITIES, AND TO ENSURE THAT THEY RECEIVE REQUISITE INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION AND RESOURCES. THE SPECTRUM OF

ISSUES WITHIN THE PURVIEW OF THE BODIES MONITORED BY THE MULTILATERAL (POLITICAL) DIVISION IS VAST, WITH RESULTANT, EQUAL POTENTIAL BENEFIT, FOR THE WIDER BAHAMIAN SOCIETY.

100. **MR SPEAKER**, OF NOTE FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE IS THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE BAHAMAS IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS. COMMONWEALTH MEMBERSHIP HAS MADE THE BAHAMAS ELIGIBLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE COMMONWEALTH OFFICE FOR SMALL STATES IN GENEVA, SWITZERLAND. THE GOVERNMENT HAS AVAILED ITSELF OF THIS OPPORTUNITY, AS A VIABLE COST-EFFECTIVE OPTION, TO PURSUE THE PRIORITY COMMITMENT AND EXTENSIVE INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH ACCESSION TO THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION (WTO). THE OFFICE WILL ALSO ENABLE THE BAHAMAS TO BENEFIT FROM COMMONWEALTH EXPERTISE. IN ADDITION TO OVERSEEING OUR ACCESSION TO THE WTO, THIS OFFICE WILL ALSO BE ACCREDITED TO OTHER APPROPRIATE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS HEADQUARTERED IN GENEVA.

101. **MR SPEAKER**, THE MULTILATERAL DIVISION ALSO HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPORTANT HEMISPHERIC AND REGIONAL BODIES, SUCH AS THE OAS AND THE ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS). THROUGH ITS MEMBERSHIP IN THE OAS, THE BAHAMAS HAS ACCESS TO TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES WHICH, ANNUALLY, BENEFIT RELEVANT GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND STUDENTS ALIKE.

102. **MR SPEAKER**, THE BAHAMAS HAS GIVEN BACK TO THE OAS, FOR EXAMPLE, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM), WHICH HAS PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN SUPPORTING HAITI DURING ITS RECENT STRUGGLES, THROUGH, FOR EXAMPLE, THE PROVISION OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE CARICOM-OAS JOINT ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION, WHICH MONITORED THE TWO ROUNDS OF THE RECENT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF HAITI.

103. AS REGARDS THE ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS), **MR SPEAKER**, ALTHOUGH THIS ORGANISATION IS EXPERIENCING MAJOR INTERNAL ADMINISTRATIVE TENSIONS AND REFORM, IT HAS ASSISTED AND EXPRESSED COMMITMENT TO CONTINUE TO ASSIST THE BAHAMAS IN THE CRITICAL AREA OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT.

104. **MR SPEAKER**, THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION (CWC) AND ITS INTERNATIONALLY MANDATED NATIONAL AUTHORITY TO OVERSEE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION, FALLS UNDER THE PURVIEW OF MY MINISTRY. THE NATIONAL AUTHORITY CONDUCTS ITS WORK THROUGH A NATIONAL EXECUTING COMMITTEE (EC), WHICH IS CURRENTLY CHAIRED BY UNDER SECRETARY MARILYN ZONICLE OF MY MINISTRY. THE EXECUTING COMMITTEE PRESENTLY HAS BEFORE CABINET AN IMPLEMENTATION STATUS REPORT, WHICH INCORPORATES PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO SATISFY ALL INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS REQUIRED UNDER THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION (CWC).

105. **MR SPEAKER**, THE CURRENT PRIORITY FOCUS OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK RELATES TO THE FOLLOWING THREE (3) ISSUES:

- FIRSTLY, IN CONJUNCTION WITH REGULATORY AGENCIES, THE DESIGN AND OPERATIONALISATION OF AN INTEGRATED, ELECTRONIC TRACKING SYSTEM FOR CWC-SCHEDULED CHEMICALS AND RELATED DUAL AGENT CHEMICALS, WHICH CAN BE DIVERTED FOR CREATION OF A CHEMICAL WEAPON;
- SECONDLY, INSTALLATION OF AN EXPERIENCED, CHEMICALLY QUALIFIED TECHNICAL HEAD FOR THE NATIONAL AUTHORITY, WHOSE SEAT IS IN MY MINISTRY; AND
- THIRDLY, SUPPORT TO THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY FOR ITS HOSTING OF A REGIONAL OPCW-CARICOM REGIONAL WORKSHOP IN THE BAHAMAS DURING THE MONTH OF MARCH, AIMED AT ASSISTING THE CARIBBEAN REGION TO UPGRADE ITS PREPAREDNESS TO IMPLEMENT AND BENEFIT FROM UNITED NATIONS SECURITY RESOLUTION 1540. THIS RESOLUTION DEALS WITH CURBING INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM FROM WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION (NUCLEAR, CHEMICAL, AND BIOLOGICAL).

106. AS A STATE PARTY UNDER THE CWC, THE BAHAMAS HAS BENEFITED FROM TECHNICAL TRAINING FROM THE ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS (OPCW), WHICH ADMINISTERS THE CONVENTION. DURING THE PRESENT FISCAL YEAR, AGENCIES WHICH HAVE BENEFITED HAVE BEEN: THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL, THE CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT, AND THE ROYAL BAHAMAS POLICE FORCE, IN THE AREAS OF LEGISLATIVE DRAFTING, INSPECTION PROCESSES AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE, RESPECTIVELY.

107. IN CONCLUDING THIS BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE WORK OF MY MINISTRY OVER THE PAST BUDGETARY PERIOD, **MR SPEAKER**, I WISH TO REITERATE AN OBSERVATION MADE IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR 2010/2011 BUDGET SUBMISSION LAST YEAR, BECAUSE IT BEARS REPEATING: AND THIS IS THE FACT THAT THE WORK OF THE MULTILATERAL (POLITICAL) DIVISION EPITOMISES A TRUISM FOR MY ENTIRE MINISTRY, NAMELY, THE TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE OPPORTUNITIES WHICH FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE CONDUCT OF DIPLOMACY BRING FOR NATIONAL SOLUTIONS AND DEVELOPMENT, AND FOR INTERNATIONAL CREDIBILITY.

108. THANK YOU.