

**MESSAGE FROM THE HONOURABLE FRED A. MITCHELL, M.P.,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION OF
THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS**

It is indeed an honour to convey my personal best wishes to all who commemorate the 40th Anniversary of Bahamian Independence. As the song goes, “We have come a mighty, mighty long way.”

Not too long ago, the Bahamian majority was designated as second-class economic and political citizens in their own country. The history of the modern Bahamas, however, is a history of defiance in the face of immoral oppression.

The period leading up to Independence saw the struggle of many heroic figures agitating for greater political power for Bahamian people and the triumph of the Bahamian electorate with the enfranchisement of women, the achievement of internal self-governance and the attainment of Majority Rule.

The lowering of the Union Jack on July 9th, 1973, not only signaled a symbolic shift towards more pervasive self governance but also precipitated an expansion of the ideals of Bahamianization, which produced the iconic institutions which still provide valuable service to Bahamians today - the Central Bank, College of The Bahamas, National Insurance Board, Bahamas Air and the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, amongst others.

Today, after four decades of transformation led for and by The Bahamian people, our country stands as a beacon in the region, exemplifying stable, good governance, steady economic growth and pervasive social freedoms for her people. We indeed have much to be thankful for.

Nonetheless, it is with the same spirit of urgency and purpose exemplified in the early nation builders that we must attend to the tasks of continuing to nurture a more expansive Bahamian development, which broadens the equality and freedoms afforded to all Bahamians.

We have come a mighty long way but our collective work is not finished. In our celebrations, we must never forget that, irrespective of space, time or geography, we are all One Bahamas. Our Diaspora abroad will play a pivotal role in furthering this great project of Bahamian development.

The deep historical roots of the Bahamian Diaspora around the world will continue to form fertile ground for expanding the mutually beneficial links between the Bahamas and countries in which Bahamians are resident. I challenge you to forge deeper and more innovative ties with your country, with the ultimate goal of partnering for sustainable economic and social development.

In closing, I again wish a happy Independence to all celebrating this 40th Anniversary and particularly, wish to congratulate the staff of the Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates of The Bahamas around the world on this initiative, and wish you success in your celebrations. In the spirit of this year’s theme, “The Bridge to the Future...The Journey Continues”, it is my hope that, as Bahamians, we would continue to move forward, upward and onward, together, bolstered by an abiding love for God, country and our fellow citizens, as we pursue forty more years of progress for the best little country on earth.