

AIDE MEMOIRE

CANDIDATURE OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS FOR RE-ELECTION TO THE IMO COUNCIL, CATEGORY 'C'

The Twenty Seventh Regular Session of the Assembly of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is scheduled to be held in London, from 21st to 30th November, 2011. Elections for the forty (40) Members of the Council will be held during this Assembly.

The Commonwealth of The Bahamas has served on the Council from 1991 to 1995 and from 1999 to 2011, and has decided to seek re-election to the Council under Category "C", at the forthcoming Assembly. It should be recalled that the Council membership is made up of three groups of States, designated A, B and C. Category C is open to those twenty (20) States which have special interests in maritime transport or navigation, and, whose election to the Council will ensure the representation of all major geographic areas of the world. The Bahamas exemplifies the highest credentials in each of these areas.

The Bahamas has over sixteen hundred ships, consisting of some fifty-five (55) million gross tons on our shipping Register. This tonnage includes 24% tanker, 23% container and cargo, 14% bulk carrier and 13% roll-on, roll-off and passenger vessels, including the world's largest cruise liner, the Royal Caribbean's Oasis of the Seas.

The Bahamas has, consequently, ratified and respects the legal framework developed by the IMO, having acceded to all of its major international Conventions. These include: Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW), and Suppression of Unlawful Acts (SUA). Most recently, The Bahamas acceded to the International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-fouling Systems on Ships, 2001 (AFS Convention), and, the International Convention on Civil Liability for Bunker Oil Pollution Damage, 2001 (Bunkers Convention). In addition, The Bahamas was among the first to accede to the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC), demonstrating once again commitment to the indispensable human resources of ships' crews.

Recognising the fundamental aim of enhancing maritime security and the expanded scope of maritime safety and protection of the marine environment, The Bahamas has fulfilled all of her obligations pertaining to Long Range Identification and Tracking of Ships (LRIT). Our LRIT Data Centre was one of the first to be operationalised. Thereby naval forces are assisted in their efforts to eradicate the scourge of piracy, and so keep ships safe.

To ensure that the legal and regulatory framework has the desired positive impact, given the significant, global role which The Bahamas has as a Flag Register, The Bahamas participates actively and constructively in all IMO Committees and Sub-committees, as well as demonstrates leadership in many debates. This is particularly so within the Sub-committee on Flag State Implementation which is chaired by the Deputy Director of the Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA).

The Bahamas has, for example, played a significant role in developing many of the safety and environmental instruments. The Bahamas submitted papers for discussion on a wide variety of issues including lifeboat hooks, enclosed space entry, the reduction of greenhouse gases, and cruise vessel safety. In the discussions on greenhouse gases, The Bahamas has taken the lead with proposals which could result in actual reductions in CO₂ emissions, critical for Countries such as The Bahamas which are at risk from climate change.

At the national level, since 1995, Bahamian maritime affairs have been managed by the government-controlled Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA). The BMA works closely with Classification Societies which carry out much of the approval and inspection work. The BMA retains oversight of their work and ensures that the ships on the Register remain in compliance with all the required legislation through a world-wide network of over 240 inspectors. These inspectors conduct inspections of the ships and report the findings back to the BMA. Through this process, Bahamas registered ships are known to have high safety and environmental standards.

The Bahamas is unique in her embodiment of the geography eligibility criterion for IMO Council membership.

As a maritime Nation, consisting of an Archipelago of some 700 Islands, surrounded by beautiful coral seas, preservation of the marine environment is paramount. This policy is consonant with IMO principles for safe ships, crewed by well trained seafarers, which will ensure that the marine environment remains in a pristine state for future generations. The Bahamas is also a geographically strategic maritime State, as significant international straits dissect her Archipelago, and link the major global Hemispheres and economic centres.

The Bahamas also possesses, aesthetically and commercially, some of the best ports in the Region. The two major ports, Nassau and Freeport, have undergone important developments in recent years. Nassau has greatly increased and improved its facilities for cruise ships, making it one of the favourite ports of call in the Caribbean Region, and is a regular port of call for the latest and largest generation of cruise liners. Freeport is one of the Region's major container terminals and possesses three dry docks and major repair berths. Transshipment of crude oil also takes place as does the provision of bunker fuels. Repair facilities, coupled with the container berths, petroleum products transshipment and

bunkering facilities make Freeport one of the first choices for maritime services as well as attracting regular cruise ship visits.

For many years The Bahamas has worked closely with her Caribbean Neighbours in a number of areas, relating to flag, port and coastal State responsibilities. The Bahamas is an active member of the Caribbean Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (CMOU) where she holds the position of chairmanship of the MOU Technical Committee which has developed safety standards for small ships trading in the Caribbean Region. Through active involvement in the CMOU activities and the provision of technical expertise to regional seminars/conferences, The Bahamas remains committed to preserving and enhancing the level of maritime safety, security and environmental protection in the Caribbean Region. In keeping with this commitment to enhancing environmental protection in the Caribbean Region, The Bahamas is also a part of the Global Environment Facility-United Nations Development Programme-International Maritime Organisation (GEF-UNDP-IMO) GloBallast Partnerships Project as a Lead Partnering Country (LPC) in the Wider Caribbean Region.

Thus, The Bahamas' tenure on the IMO Council has been characterised by an assiduous, constructive, forward-looking ethic and spirit of co-operation, aimed at fostering the Organization's goals of maintaining the highest standard of maritime safety, efficiency of navigation and protection of the marine environment. If honoured with the privilege of re-election, The Bahamas will continue to do the same. The Bahamas, therefore, welcomes your Government's invaluable support for her Candidature for re-election to the Council of the IMO under Category "C" under the provisions of Article 17 (c) of the IMO Convention.

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