



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS

Fellow Citizens of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas:

I extend every best wish for a happy and safe Independence Anniversary Celebration. This year we celebrate under the theme “38 years - United in Love and Service”.

During the past 38 years we have evolved from a small colony on the periphery of the British Empire into a vibrant democracy and international business centre, proud of our social and political stability and determined to broaden economic opportunities for every citizen. Our success to date is manifested in the fact that we enjoy one of the highest per capita incomes among countries in the Americas.

Nevertheless, in recent years we, like much of the rest of the world, have endured economic hardships, the fallout from the global economic recession. In the face of such adversity we responded in ways that reflect the theme of this year’s anniversary celebrations. We preserved public sector jobs, increased social assistance programmes, introduced an unemployment benefit, implemented a short term jobs programme, implemented a jobs training programme and accelerated planned infrastructure projects so as to improve service to the Bahamian people while protecting private sector jobs and serving as a catalyst for more job creation.

Those initiatives are now being expanded to include new job- readiness training, a new jobs creation programme and special targeted initiatives to support small and medium size businesses. These will all contribute to our planned return to economic prosperity as the world economy and our own continue their recovery.

Sadly, our celebration of this 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary of nationhood is marred by a continued high incidence of crime. While the Government has mounted a multifaceted response to the problem it is increasingly important that all Bahamians unite in sending a clear message to the small minority of persons who break our social contract of good neighbourliness and who choose to live outside of the law, that we will neither tolerate nor excuse their criminal behaviour.

In this regard, we should all recall and reflect upon the important role that the extended family and the neighbourhood have played in our development as a people who are open and welcoming, who share easily and who believe that service is a virtue.

As is my custom, I wish to once again use this year's Independence Day Message to thank all those who serve our people throughout the year, those in the private sector, in trade unions, in our churches and civic organizations, and throughout the public sector.

I wish also to acknowledge and thank all those who work in our diplomatic, tourism and maritime services internationally. Many of them will celebrate independence at their overseas post where they pursue our country's interests internationally. I acknowledge their sacrifice and thank them for their continued service to our country.

We will face many challenges in the year ahead: achieving economic recovery and expansion, protecting our environment from degradation in the face of climate change and sea level rise, safeguarding the supply and cost of energy and of food and winning our war on crime.

We are a hardy people, self-reliant and bolstered by a long tradition of resourcefulness and self-reliance. So as we celebrate this 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our independence we recall those qualities.

Fellow Bahamians, on this special national anniversary I extend my very best for a happy and safe Independence Day and pray God's blessings upon our nation and upon each and every one of us.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "AUSAA Douglas", with a horizontal line underneath it.

July 2011