



CLOSING STATEMENT BY
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE LEO RYAN PINDER KC
ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER OF LEGAL AFFAIRS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
FOURTH CYCLE OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW
OF
THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS
AT THE
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UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

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GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Introduction

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Representatives of Civil Society, Ladies and Gentlemen—Good Afternoon.

Mr. President, The Bahamas is, and always has been, committed to ensuring full Human Rights to all persons living in the country and visiting her shores. The Bahamas looks forward to active, immediate and comprehensive review of all Recommendations received, with a view to responding as soon as possible.

In addition, as previously stated in my opening remarks, the Government will be instituting mechanisms to formalize implementation of the International Human Rights Instruments to which we are a party, to meet our reporting obligations and to improve the overall human rights reporting, implementation and monitoring process for The Bahamas.

Mr. President, the founders of the United Nations responded to the horrors of the Second World War, by not only emphasizing Human Rights in the United Nations Charter, but by establishing, in the very first words of the Charter, that the primary beneficiaries of the rights, privileges and obligations under the Charter, are “**We the Peoples...**”.

Recognizing this principle there are three areas I want to highlight as part of this Closing that have been raised in advanced questions and observations and where the immediate intervention and commitment of this august body is required.

Haiti

Political impasse and unprecedented levels of gang violence now plague the state of Haiti. This is the worst political, security, and humanitarian crisis to hit the country in decades. Day by Day the

humanitarian crisis in Haiti becomes more and more grave, with little global multilateral intervention.

As mentioned, CARICOM chaired by the Prime Minister of The Bahamas are formulating strategies for the stability of Haiti, however, more intervention is required. Regional states are also at threat from the instability in Haiti as the disruption moves across borders.

The Government of The Bahamas continues to act as one of the lead countries in the region seeking to find a solution to the ongoing crisis in the Republic of Haiti. The Bahamas is the only CARICOM country which has an Embassy in Haiti. The Government of The Bahamas and CARICOM Member States have been engaging in technical talks with Haitian stakeholders. The Bahamas, in conjunction with the CARICOM Secretariat and CARICOM Member States, has met with the relevant international stakeholders including the United States of America, Canada, some African countries the European Union (EU) and others, in order to take a united approach in assisting the Haitian Government.

We in the region ask for more intervention, attention and involvement in providing a framework for stability and rule of law in Haiti. The Haitian people demand it, we demand it.

Climate Crisis

Climate change directly impacts the human rights of individuals living in The Bahamas. These rights include life, as well as access to water, sanitation, food, health and housing. The Bahamas emits 0.01% of greenhouse gases but experiences billions of dollars in loss and damage as a result of climate change.

The Bahamas is no stranger to the effects of the climate crisis and can represent first-hand the devastating effects it has on the basic tenants of human rights. As hurricanes and rising water levels further threaten Caribbean islands, it is becoming more urgent to fully fund and support climate initiatives, The vulnerabilities experienced in The Bahamas are exacerbated by limited access to climate finance. We call on the United Nations to recognize the effects of the climate crisis on human rights and to ensure it is a top priority in the preservation of all forms of human rights.

Firearm Violence

Illegal firearms are plaguing our streets, finding their way into our country, exclusively from other countries. The guns used in the commission of violent crimes in The Bahamas are not manufactured here, but instead, are manufactured abroad and illegally trafficked across our borders.

A critical element of the government's effort to reduce violent crime in our country is cracking down on the proliferation of firearms, with particular focus on strengthening borders and entry points and on interrupting networks of illegal smugglers.

An example of this is our country recently joining an amicus curiae (friend of the court) brief in the United States Court of Appeal in the First Circuit, in support of Mexico, who is appealing their case to hold US gun manufacturers liable for the harm caused by their products.

We are a small country with vast waters that result in porous borders. We need larger gun manufacturing countries to take more responsibility and oversight of their gun suppliers. Too often the systems are circumvented in the manufacturing countries, resulting in violence in countries such as The Bahamas. We ask for the intervention of multilateral organizations such as the United

Nations to assist in cross border enforcement when it comes to guns, as their illegal use severely impacts a person's human rights.

The Thanks

Mr. President, in conclusion I wish to thank all of those involved in making this process possible. In particular, we express our appreciation to the Troika selected for The Bahamas, the distinguished Representatives of Paraguay, Kazakhstan and Romania, for their unwavering support and cooperation. We also owe a debt of gratitude to the colleagues in Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, including the Caribbean, American and Treaty Divisions for the assistance rendered to The Bahamas' Delegation during this process. Also, our gratitude to the UPR Secretariat and once again to the UPR Fund.

Mr. President, I wish to extend my deep thanks and appreciation to all Council Members and Observers as well as stakeholders who had the interest, and took the time, to participate in this critically important Review for The Bahamas, which comes at such an important juncture in our life as an independent nation.

We recognize that the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) emphasizes and reinforces the significance of international collaboration and, more essentially, accountability. This exercise of self-reflection, is a significant one and represents a beacon of both hope and action for States as the ultimate guarantors, of Human Rights.

Conclusion

Mr. President, our people, and their welfare are paramount in the minds and the plans of the Government, and we can assure you that the preservation of the dignity and honour of each citizen is the force that drives us daily in our efforts on their behalf.

I wish to refer to the words of our *National Anthem*, which states, and I quote:

“...pledge to excel in love and unity, pressing onward, march together, to a common loftier goal...”

We reaffirm our desire to have always before us, the achievement of this loftier goal that I believe we all share and of which the protection, promotion and fulfillment of all human rights is and will continue to be an integral part.

Mr. President, I thank you.