



NATIONAL STATEMENT

BY

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UNITED NATIONS

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN 2018

Theme:

***CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN ACHIEVING EQUALITY AND
EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN AND GIRLS***

Location:

UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

Date:

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MADAM CHAIR

THIS IS MY FIRST PARTICIPATION IN THIS VERY IMPORTANT MEETING; AND THE BAHAMAS AS A MEMBER OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY IS GRATEFUL TO ONCE AGAIN REPORT TO THIS AUGUST BODY ON THE STATUS OF OUR WOMEN AND GIRLS, AND TO ENGAGE FRUITFUL DIALOGUE TOWARD TANGIBLE RESULTS FROM THIS 62ND SESSION.

TODAY, I AM PROUD TO BE JOINED WITH THE BAHAMAS' DELEGATION OF 40 WOMEN AS WE REPORT ON THE ADVANCEMENTS OF OUR SMALL ISLAND NATION.

THE 21ST CENTURY HAS USHERED IN AN ERA OF GLOBALIZATION, TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT, AND THE UNVEILING OF A NEW FRONTIER OF OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS LIVING IN RURAL SPACES AND COMMUNITIES.

AS AN ARCHIPELAGO, THE BAHAMAS HAS 19 PRINCIPLE/MAJOR ISLANDS, ALL OF WHICH HAVE RURAL COMMUNITIES OR SPACES, AND GOVERNMENT PROVIDES

EQUAL ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES ON ALL OF THESE ISLANDS.

MADAM CHAIR

MY GOVERNMENT IS WORKING TOWARD USING ICT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, AND THE INTRODUCTION OF SMART DEVICES AND TELE-MEDICINE ENSURES OUR WOMEN AND GIRLS ON OUR ISLANDS ARE NOT LEFT BEHIND.

WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THESE COMMUNITIES SHARE VALUABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESSES IN THE AREA OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND NATIVE CRAFT. HOWEVER, DUE TO THEIR REMOTE PROXIMITY AND DEPENDENCY ON THE TRADITIONAL MAILBOAT SYSTEM, ENTREPRENEURS ON THESE ISLANDS ARE CHALLENGED WITH LIMITED ACCESS TO THE IMPORTEXPORT MARKETS NECESSARY TO PURCHASE COMMODITIES AND EXPORT THEIR ORGANICALLY GROWN PRODUCTS.

FOOD SECURITY GENERALLY REMAINS IN TACT ON THESE ISLANDS. HOWEVER, THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE REFLECTIVE IN THE INCREASE AND INTENSITY OF HURRICANES ACCOMPANIED BY FLOODING, HIGH RAIN DENSITY AND STRONG WINDS THREATEN ISLAND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK AND RESULTS IN DISPLACEMENT OF FAMILIES.

EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY DISASTER RELIEF EFFORTS ARE CRUCIAL TO RURAL COMMUNITIES RETURNING TO A STATE OF NORMALCY AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE AFTER A NATURAL DISASTER. THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN PROMPT RECOVERY INTERVENTIONS SUCH AS SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN TERMS OF FOOD, SHELTER, HOME RESTORATION AND OTHER ESSENTIAL SERVICES IS IMPERATIVE. MOREOVER, REPLACEMENT OF CLOTHING, MEDICATIONS AND PROVISION OF COUNSELLING AND DISABILITY SERVICES ARE EQUALLY CRITICAL IN THE AFTERMATH OF THESE HURRICANES.

MADAM CHAIR, I WISH TO EMPHASIZE HERE, THAT THE NEED FOR DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE AND DATA COLLECTION SUPPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED OR OVERSTATED

OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES ARE ALSO CHALLENGED WITH LIMITED ACCESS TO LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL BANKING FACILITIES; AND ACCESS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION IS LIMITED. WE MUST FIND INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES TO ENSURE EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT OF OUR WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH MINIMAL INTERRUPTION TO FAMILY LIFE.

MADAM CHAIR

NOTWITHSTANDING THESE CHALLENGES, FOR OVER 200 YEARS OUR ISLANDS HAVE BEEN OFFICIALLY INHABITED, AND TO DATE, WE ENJOY PEACEFUL GOVERNANCE, AND AN EXCEPTIONAL ATMOSPHERE OF CIVILIZATION AND MODERNIZED WAY OF LIFE. WITH GRIT AND DETERMINATION, RURAL FAMILIES, SOME LED BY WOMEN, HAVE MANAGED TO EKE OUT STRONG COMMUNITIES FROM WHICH GREAT LEADERS HAVE BEEN BORN AND MADE. THE

TWO FEMALE GOVERNORS GENERAL EVER APPOINTED WERE PRODUCTS OF THESE RURAL COMMUNITIES.

THIS YEAR WE CELEBRATE OUR 45TH INDEPENDENCE, AND DESPITE OUR UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT AT A CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM IN 2016, AFFECTING INTER ALIA, THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN, WE BELIEVE A MORE ROBUST EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN WOULD REAP BETTER RESULTS.

MADAM CHAIR

INITIATIVES DESIGNED TO EMPOWER WOMEN AND GIRLS, AND TO RAISE AWARENESS OF OUR RIGHT TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE URBAN AND RURAL COMMUNITY FORUMS, INFORMATION SHARING MEETINGS, ANTIDOMESTIC VIOLENCE INITIATIVES, AND CONSISTENT PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES DESIGNED FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS.

WE ARE HAPPY TO REPORT OUR ELECTION TO THE CEDAW COMMITTEE, AND CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO THE

INITIATIVES AND PRINCIPLES ESTABLISHED UNDER THE
BELEM DO PARA CONVENTION.

FINALLY MADAM CHAIR

I WISH TO ASSURE THIS HONOURABLE BODY OF THE
BAHAMAS' CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO GENDER
EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS.
I THANK THE UNITED NATIONS FOR THIS SPACE TO UNITE,
SHARE AND PROMOTE RURAL WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE
BAHAMAS AND AROUND THE WORLD.

I THANK YOU