



Communication to Parliament Hurricane Dorian

**The Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis
Prime Minister**

Wednesday, 9 October 2019

Nassau, Bahamas

Mr. Speaker:

Following my first communication to the House last week in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, I rise to offer a second communication on response and recovery efforts.

I will provide further details and information to the House next week as additional information and reporting is made by government ministries and agencies.

Mr. Speaker:

The response to Hurricane Dorian is a comprehensive and global effort led and coordinated by the Government of The Bahamas.

The full resources of the Government are deployed.

In addition to our national resources, we are grateful for the regional and international assistance being deployed in

response to one the most powerful hurricanes ever in the Atlantic.

It is in this spirit and with tremendous gratitude that I recognize the:

scores of Bahamian citizens;

the local private sector and NGOs;

the Bahamian Diaspora;

and the international community for the outpouring of solidarity and assistance for rescue, recovery and reconstruction.

There are scores of public officers in our uniformed branches and in every ministry who are working around the clock to coordinate our national response to the most devastating hurricane ever to hit our country.

We must never forget the work of the religious community, from home and abroad, for their outpouring of spiritual and physical resources, which we need to bind

and to heal our wounds, and to renew our individual spirits and our national spirit.

I met with another group of religious ministers from the United States last week.

One of the pastors was involved in recovery efforts following a recent devastating hurricane in one of our Caribbean neighbors.

This minister, praised the overall response of The Bahamas people, to Hurricane Dorian.

It is important that we pause in a spirit of gratitude, and hope, to acknowledge the good work of the army of Bahamians, and foreign individuals from every sector, who are on the frontlines of the biggest recovery and reconstruction effort in our history.

This spirit of gratitude, volunteerism, and hope, has been captured in the

inspiring video: “A United Influence of Purpose”.

Mr. Speaker:

The Reconstruction Ministry is in the process of deploying temporary housing for government employees on Abaco.

One hundred RV trailers will accommodate 300 critical government personnel, who will play an essential role in reconstruction and recovery.

I note that a protocol is being determined for the relocating of individuals back to Abaco.

Further, a land site, next to the Spring City subdivision on Abaco, is being prepared to create the Family Relief Centre, which will serve as temporary housing accommodations for families affected by Hurricane Dorian.

The Family Relief Centre will comprise 250 dome structures that will include plumbing, drainage, a sewer system, and electricity.

Each dome can accommodate between four to five people.

The estimated cost for this facility is \$6.4 million dollars.

Land is being prepared and trenching begins this week.

Materials for the infrastructure work are scheduled to arrive on Abaco next week.

Mr. Speaker:

While the health care infrastructure on Abaco was impacted by Dorian, health care services are being delivered in all districts previously receiving care.

In Marsh Harbor, the major health care center for the island sustained minor

damage, and has maintained delivery of all services.

This holds true for Sandy Point Clinic in the south.

In the north, Coopers Town Clinic sustained significant roof damage but with the help of relief workers in the immediate aftermath, minor repairs were made which facilitated use of the clinic for ongoing care.

The Fox Town Clinic, with minor damage, has continued to provide services,

benefitting from the early repair of the bridge which allowed for staff and patients to move between both clinics and access care as needed.

A notable change in the need for increased health care services occurred in the Treasure Cay district which is usually served by the Coopers Town Clinic and a private clinic.

However since Dorian, due to population shifting, there is a growing need for additional health care services in the area.

Mr. Speaker:

Clinics on the Abaco Cays, while small in stature, often serve as the only health presence, and play a vital role in ensuring access to a minimum level of care and management of urgent and emergent health care needs.

While the Green Turtle Cay, Man-o-War Cay, and Moores Island clinics sustained minimal damages, and are currently functional, the Hope Town Clinic was destroyed, with services now being delivered in an alternate make shift location.

The continuity and augmentation of health services on Great Abaco, and in the cays, was made possible in the immediate aftermath of Dorian due to relief health care

providers from organizations such as Rubicon, Heart to Heart, Humanity First, the Dutch Military, as well as individual volunteers and groups, some of which remain on island.

Mr. Speaker:

On Grand Bahama, health care services have been significantly disrupted with the Rand Memorial Hospital being rendered almost completely uninhabitable by Dorian.

Fortunately, Samaritans Purse, a field Hospital, has been on the ground providing needed services since the immediate aftermath of Dorian.

A further compromise to Grand Bahama health care services as a result of Dorian, is the destruction of the Pelican Point and High Rock Clinics, with McClean's Town, Free Town, Sweetings Cay, and Grand Cay Clinics, rendered non-operational, leaving

only Eight mile Rock and Hawksbill clinics operational.

Mr. Speaker:

In the aftermath of a disaster such as Dorian, public health concerns can arise due to the disruption of safe water supplies and inadequate sanitation.

Interventions to prevent possible associated illnesses must be priority such

as the provision of potable water, safe food and vector control measures.

With enhanced education and ongoing monitoring for illness in the impacted areas as well as in evacuee shelters on New Providence and Eleuthera, along with surveillance at sentinel clinic sites across the country, to date there are no significant illness which constitute a concern to public health.

Mr. Speaker:

Psychological support post-disaster is essential to aide with recovery and minimize the risk of long term mental health concerns.

In this regard, the Ministry of Health in collaboration with Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre, the Bahamas Psychological Association, other volunteer groups and non-governmental organizations has partnered to ensure provision of wide and

ongoing access to this vital service, for individuals on impacted islands, evacuees, relief workers, and all desirous of availing themselves with these services.

Group and individual sessions are being made available, hotlines numbers have been circulating on social media, as well as enhanced surveillance using a simple screening tool at health care facilities, to allow for early detection and management of mental health concerns.

Mr. Speaker:

This past weekend I returned to Grand Bahama to further assess recovery and reconstruction needs.

NEMA Grand Bahama has provided an extensive summary report on response, recovery, and reconstruction on Grand Bahama, dated October 7, 2019.

I wish to provide the House with some of the details from this Report.

***Grand Bahama Health Services/
Public Hospital Authority***

I wish to begin with an update on health services on Grand Bahama.

- Maternal & Child Health Inpatient Services are operating from Sunrise Medical Centre
- Emergency Services, Walk-in and Inpatient services are being provided in conjunction with Samaritan's Purse
- Services for East End are being provided in conjunction with

International Medical Corp, Outpatient and Community Clinic services

- Services for Grand Cay are being provided in conjunction with Pacific Hope – Community Clinic services
- West End – in conjunction with Mercy Corp.
- Reinstated specialty clinics and community clinic services are being provided at the following:

➤ Pearce Plaza: Specialty Clinics

- Medical Pavilion: Chronic Non-communicable Diseases Clinic
 - Community Clinics at Hawksbill, Eight Mile Rock and West End are re-opened
-
- The Tesla Corp. is supplying solar power to clinics without electrical power. This includes: High Rock, West End and Grand Cay.

- Deficit in service presently: Sweetings
Cay Community clinic services
- Rand Hospital:
 - Inpatient services are presently down.
 - Emergency services presently operational.
 - Water and electrical services in place in entire facility.
 - Inpatient area closed for decontamination and subject to

Government decision on the way forward for repair or relocation of services to modular facility.

Urgent needs:

- Transportation to provide patient care services (entire fleet of vehicles destroyed in storm)
- Tents/modular offices for staff to work from until semi-permanent structures are provided

- Potable water for sanitary health care to clients and drinking water for staff and patients at our health care sites is required
- Drinking water delivered to Rand will be distributed to other health facilities for GBHS
- Stable water systems (desalination and reverse osmosis) and stable power systems (solar) for outlying clinic facilities, inclusive of Grand Cay, Sweeting's Cay, East End, Pearce

Plaza, Hawksbill and Davies House,
as back-up to City provisions.

- Mold remediation: continuous evaluation and cleaning for services and areas that are operational to mitigate concerns and contamination of workspace.
- To be placed in structures that can withstand heavy rain and winds, as we are still in hurricane and rainy season through November 30th.

Grand Bahama Transportation:

Recovery phase efforts have focused on assisting with the relocation of several hundred people from different shelters.

Teams have also collected and delivered thousands of pounds of goods, water, miscellaneous items, and personnel from the Freeport Harbour, Airport, West and East Grand Bahama and the Freeport area.

Critical transportation assistance is being provided by Bahamian and Trinidadian Military Forces.

The Royal Bahamas Police Force was also assisted with transportation into West End, along with the search and excavation process in the East Grand Bahama area.

Lastly, the following organizations have received direct assistance from our teams:

IsraAid, West Palm Beach Relief Cruise, Hopeforce, The Public Hospital Authority (P.H.A) and several other NGOs.

Water Distribution Grand Bahama:

Mr. Speaker:

To ensure members of the public can access potable water due to the high level of salinity in the water, several international organizations assisted NEMA with setting

up distribution points throughout the Grand Bahama Community.

Samaritan's Purse through the Reverse Osmosis System at the Rand Memorial Hospital is supplying potable water for:

- West End Clinic
- Sweeting's Cay
- Emergency Field Hospital (IAT Clinic)
- Kwan Yin Apartment
- St. John's Native Baptist Church

Global Medic is supplying potable water for:

- St. John's Jubilee Cathedral
- Church of God of Prophecy
- Candid Security
- World Central Kitchen
- St. Cleveland Baptist Church
- The Seventh Day Adventist Church

FPO

- Mary Star of the Sea
- Universal Household of Faith
- Central Church of God
- Grace Bible Fellowship

- Church of God Fairfield
- Agape House
- Calvary Baptist Church

Mercy Corps through the Reverse Osmosis System at the Freeport Sports Complex is providing potable water for:

- Eight Mile Rock Clinic
- Hawksbill Clinic
- Pearce Plaza Clinic
- Beacon School
- The YMCA

- Dominion School
- Salvation Army
- Life Community Church

High Rock is now receiving potable water from the Grand Bahama Utility Company (GBUC) during a designated time each day.

The Department of Environmental Health Services has issued a Certificate of Approval to the GBUC for the production of Reverse Osmosis systems to the following

NGO's: Samaritans Purse, Mercy Corps, IsraAID and Polymers International LTD.

The distribution sites at the YMCA and The Salvation Army have the capacity to provide 1,500 gallons of water.

The other distributions sites have the capacity to provide 250 gallons of water.

IsraAID has the capacity to provide over 500 gallons daily at their locations.

I note that: “IsraAID is an Israeli-based humanitarian aid agency that responds to emergency crises and engages in international development around the world.”

Grand Bahama Port Authority

Assessment:

Mr. Speaker:

The Grand Bahama Port Authority submitted the following information to NEMA.

The following 12 subdivisions in Freeport were affected by flood waters:

- Hawksbill
- Regency Park 1 & 2
- North Bahamia
- Central Area
- Fairfield (including the Airport)
- East Section (all areas)
- Mayfield Park
- Poinciana Garden
- East Coral
- Coral Reef (1,2 &3)

- Hudson Estates
- Queens Cove

The following subdivisions in Lucaya were affected by floodwaters:

- Yeoman Wood
- Heritage
- Grasmere
- Freeport Ridge
- Devon
- Arden Forest
- Greening Glade

- Lincoln Green (lady lake)
- All Subdivisions over Sir Jack Hayward Bridge (~20 in total)

Rapid Assessment for Properties Beyond Sir Jack Hayward Bridge

- 233 properties have been accessed.
- 171 properties are deemed unsafe to occupy
- 36 properties are deemed restricted use
- 26 properties are safe to occupy

Detail Damage assessments:

- 7 of the 233 properties received damage between 1-10%
- 26 of the 233 properties received damage between 10-30%
- 80 of the 233 properties received damage between 30-60%
- 76 of the 233 properties received damage between 60-90%
- 38 of the 233 properties received damage between 90-100%
- 6 No Data

- 67.33 % of the damages are structural
- 21.89% of the damages are electrical
- 10.86 of the damages are environmental

In terms of electrical supply GB Power has energized approximately 90% of their customers.

Approximately 3,000 are not yet energized including East Grand Bahama and the surrounding cays.

Mr. Speaker:

There is considerable debris to clean up.

Thus far, 81 truckloads of debris has been transported to the Pine Ridge Landfill.

In addition, 14 of 22 subdivisions in the Freeport area have received their first round of cleanup.

However, the remaining eight subdivisions are set to receive their first round of cleanup, which is expected to take three weeks to complete.

These are (East Section 1-5, Mayfield Park and Poinciana Gardens.) We are still awaiting information on Lucaya.

Grand Bahama Utility Company (GBUC):

GBUC's assessment of the wellfields has revealed the entire water lens was inundated with saltwater.

Testing over the past three weeks has indicated the salinity levels has significantly

reduced, however we have yet to achieve World Health Organizing (WHO) Standards.

GBUC has engaged numerous consultants to assist in achieving the acquired levels to meet WHO standards.

Currently GBUC has restored 60% of its wellfields and is providing water to 90% of its customers with the exception of two of the three remote water plants out east.

Grand Bahama Power Company:

Mr. Speaker:

The Grand Bahama Power Company has provided a report of their assessment post-Dorian.

Transmission and Distribution System Damage Assessment

Four out of eight transmission substations suffered water and flood damage to electronic equipment, batteries and communications equipment.

Two of the four were fully submerged in three feet of salt water.

Without functioning substation equipment no power can be distributed.

All outdoor equipment (transformers, insulators, switches, capacitors etc.) suffered a severe pounding with airborne salt water, and required careful cleaning with pure water, to remove all salt, which is a conductor of electricity and highly corrosive.

All poles and wires infrastructure lying to the east of the University of the Bahamas were effectively totally destroyed all the way to McLeans Town.

The substation at Equinor was surprisingly intact and is serviceable, although no customers are currently in the area.

Equinor is self-providing power at the moment.

Power was restored first to key areas in Freeport and the West.

All the major industrial customers: Shipyard; Container Port; Freeport Harbour; Buckeye; Polymers; Pharmachem, and Bahama Rock, were energized within the first two weeks after the hurricane.

Other areas receiving power on a priority basis include: all large hotels, the Rand Memorial Hospital; Samaritans Purse Hospital; Port Lucaya Marketplace; all

private and government schools; Police HQ; Fire HQ; YMCA, and NGO bases.

A process was quickly implemented in conjunction with the GBPA to have flooded homes remediated, inspected and cleared before re-energization in the Port Area.

An agreement was reached with the Ministry of Works to energize all dry and undamaged buildings in the west.

This resulted in the west being one of the first areas restored, all the way to Old Bahama Bay.

GBPC work planning teams worked continually with Aliv and BTC to co-ordinate power restoration to key communications sites and continue to do so.

GBPC work planning teams and the power restoration team with the technical assistance and leadership of – BIT,

Bahama Rock, GB Shipyard, Bradford Marine, Freeport Container Port, Polymers, Pharmachem and Buckeye -- recommissioned the GBU wellfields, and the associated pumping stations, to initiate water flow to allow the natural desalination process of the public water supply to begin.

Power was restored to 90% of buildings that were dry and ready to receive power by September 19th.

Approximately 15,700 customers have now been restored in Freeport and West Grand Bahama (Pre Dorian customer count was 19,000).

Restoration continues one dry home/business at a time now.

The missing customer count tallies with government estimates that 3000 homes, and 400 business, suffered serious damage and/or flooding.

The plan is to serve remaining and rebuilding customers in East Grand Bahama, via distributed solar and storage solutions that can be scaled upwards and outwards as communities grow.

International funding will be required to implement this work on an economic basis (the pre-Dorian customer count was only 300).

The plan is not to build back the main transmission line to the East as it is uneconomic to do so, however, appropriate local resilient and sustainable generation options exist.

The power generation and distribution plan for the East needs to be developed in conjunction with a Government resettlement and community rebuild plan to provide the most resilient, sustainable, and cost-effective clean energy solutions.

Newly installed solar panels on the Water Cay church survived intact and will be reenergized when customers are available.

Power Generation Impact

Approximately 50% of total generating capacity (Peel Street Plant 44MW) was flooded with 4ft of sea water and will be out of service for the foreseeable future.

The newer generation plant (West Sunrise 48MW) is at a higher elevation than the

Peel Street Plant and suffered no flood damage.

The plant was cleaned up and dried out from the airborne salt and returned to service four days after the all clear.

Temporary generation, to replace the Peel Street Plant Capacity while the plant is reconstructed, has now been installed to be ready to serve load when more customers return to the system.

Customs Department:

The Customs Department is working closely with NEMA to ensure that Customs procedures are being followed with as little red tape as possible.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, the Customs Department has been vigilant and aggressive in its endeavors to assist the residents and generous donors in the quick release of relief goods.

In alignment with the Exigency Order, the following Ports of Entry were designated to receive such supplies:

- The Lucayan Harbor
- Grand Bahama International Airport
- Grand Bahama Yacht Club
- West End Airport and Marina

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH SERVICES**

General Sanitation

- Officers from the Department of Environmental Health Services (DEHS) worked along with the Department of Social Services to conduct initial damage assessment immediately after the all clear was given.
- We conducted inspections of all food establishments that were flooded, as they came back in operation, ensuring the Department's minimum standards were in place.

- The Department has conducted house to house inspections of all the premises in East, and West Grand Bahama, checking structure integrity of all septic tanks.

Vector Control

- We have completed larviciding of the island.
- A team of five Vector Control Officers are on Island assisting the officers from Grand Bahama.

- An Entomologist with WHO/PAHO, held a one-day hands on workshop with our vector Control Officers introducing a different trapping system of adult mosquitoes.
- We have conducted Vector Control assessment of all Shelters and Government Schools.

Water

- The Department has certified three NGO's with the collaboration of the

Grand Bahama Utility Company for the production of potable water via Reverse Osmosis process for the island -- they are, Mercy Corps, Polymers International, and Samaritan's Purse.

- We have approved two major distributions outlets, they are at the Salvation Army premises, and Sporting Complex.
- We have produced two Public Service Announcements, for the Management/use of municipal water

supply and Management of mold infested premises.

- We have participated in a fly over the Southern coast of East End.

Mr. Speaker:

The relocation of schoolchildren, teachers, and other education personnel, is an essential element for recovery and rebuilding.

I offer the following update from the Ministry of Education on the registration of

displaced students from Abaco and Grand Bahama.

Thus far, approximately 1,400 students have been registered.

The Ministry is still in the process of tracking down the balance of the 2,500 students who were registered at schools in Abaco before Dorian struck The Bahamas.

Some of these students are in other Family Islands.

Some are in private schools.

Some went directly to government-operated schools in New Providence, and did not come through the Thomas A. Robinson Stadium for registration as requested.

Approximately 300 students remained in Abaco, not all of whom are in schools, and some students have traveled to the United States.

We know also that 50 students are at schools in Andros, and that more than 150 are being accommodated on Eleuthera.

Tragically, it is also likely that there are some school children among the persons still not accounted for in Abaco.

Approximately 100 students presented for registration at the stadium, who did not have National Insurance numbers as required, who have not been able to obtain

an NI number, and who have not yet been placed in a New Providence schools, due to their failure to meet this requirement.

National Insurance is among the government offices present at the stadium, thereby permitting parents and or guardians to obtain National Insurance numbers for their children, so that the children can be placed in schools.

The Ministry of Education is clear that there must be a process in place for each student enrolled in a government-operated school to substantiate that student's identity.

This is the only registration requirement insisted upon by the MOE for all students entering government schools, whether they be Bahamian or non-Bahamian.

The NIB number is used to track each student throughout their years in the government school sector.

Mr. Speaker:

Two schools in Freeport sustained significant water damage from sea surge: Hugh Campbell Primary School, and Maurice Moore Primary School.

All the other schools experienced minor roof damage.

Schools in West Grand Bahama, experienced minor damage.

In East Grand Bahama, four schools sustained significant damage, and will require extensive repairs, that will require an extensive amount of time. These schools include:

- East End Primary, including the teacher's cottage
- Free Town Primary, including the teacher's cottage
- Sweeting's Cay Comprehensive

- East End Junior High

There was major damage in Central Abaco. These schools include:

- Central Abaco Primary
- Patrick J. Bethel High School
- Treasure Cay Primary School
- Amy Roberts Primary School
- Great Guana Cay Primary School
- Hope Town Primary School
- Man O' War Cay Primary School

There were some schools which sustained substantial damage, yet were able to be given some level of repairs to enable them to accommodate students.

These schools include:

- Moores Island Primary
- Fox Town Primary
- Crossing Rocks Primary School
- Cherokee Sound School Primary School.

Due to the efforts of individuals in the relevant communities, these schools have been brought up to a standard to receive students for classes for half of the school day.

In the case of Cherokee Sound secondary students, they were also able to receive lessons, through the support of a volunteer, utilizing distance learning to host a virtual classroom, and the same is being

planned for James A. Pinder Primary school in Sandy Point Abaco.

There have been organic movements of schools assembling in these small island settlements, thanks to the efforts of citizens within the communities.

The Ministry of Education has always been concerned about the welfare of its staff.

Once personnel were evacuated, every effort was made to attend to their health and safety needs, in the first instance.

Counseling sessions, led by staff of the Employee Assistance Programme, in conjunction with the Bahamas Psychological Services, were carried out.

Mr. Speaker:

The Ministry of Education is awaiting advice from the Ministry of Works on the

Scopes of Work and costings, submitted by Education, for the 16 schools needed to be repaired on Grand Bahama.

The Ministry of Works has undertaken to provide those confirmed details to the MOE by Friday, 11th October, 2019.

The estimate thus far is the Ministry of Education's Hurricane Dorian relief budget will come in at approximately \$20 million.

This will include funding for:

- the repair of the 16 Grand Bahama Schools;
- for additional furniture and furnishings;
- for educational supplies;
- for the busing to school and back to the shelters for Abaconians residing in New Providence;
- funding for additional security services at these schools;

- for additional grant-in-aid to private schools who have taken in students at our the Government's request;
- for additional funding for lunch for the increased number of students in New Providence schools;
- for students from Abaco who are also being accommodated in other Family Island schools;
- and provision for fees to cover parents and guardians who are unable

to pay for certain services at schools,
such as insurance, etc.

Mr. Speaker:

The following schools in northern and southern Abaco are open, but are operating on reduced hours as a result of self-help efforts from teachers and community members:

➤ Moore's Island All Age School;

- Cherokee Sound Primary (also holding classes for secondary students)
- Crossing Rocks
- James A. Pinder
- and Fox Town Primary schools.

Agriculture & Marine Resources:

Mr. Speaker:

Grand Bahama and Abaco represent two of our leading producers in both the agriculture and fisheries sectors and form a

major component of our export market, particularly for seafood.

Post-Dorian, rapid assessment teams were dispatched to Abaco and Grand Bahama.

These teams comprised officers from the Departments of Agriculture and Marine Resources along with international partners including the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, the

Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute, and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture.

The goal was to assess the sectors affected and collect data relative to the assistance needed.

To date, more than 68% of farmers in Grand Bahama and Abaco have been evaluated for damage, and this data has

indicated that 95% of these have suffered total losses.

The loss of livestock animals has been monumental.

There is a near complete loss of all livestock animals, crops in the fields, farm houses, farm infrastructure, irrigation systems, and heavy equipment.

Because of the salt incursion on the agricultural land, farmers will have to flood large tracts of land before they can become usable again.

A second, more detailed assessment visit was conducted to Grand Bahama on Wednesday 2nd October.

The team on this mission included veterinarians, crop specialists, livestock specialists, a soil scientist and fisheries officers.

Livestock feed as well as fertilized potting soil for seed trays, seeds for cucumbers, watermelons, hot peppers and

five varieties of sweet potato slips were given to farmers on Grand Bahama.

These plants were selected because of their resilience and their quick growth rate that will allow farmers to go to market faster.

Public announcements, inviting farmers and fishers to contact the Departments were necessary due to the fact that many

had evacuated to New Providence and other islands.

However, the response from farmers has been relatively slow.

The surviving livestock were most vulnerable after the passage of the hurricane.

A donation of 17 tons of animal feed courtesy of the Caribbean Veterinarians Association was used to temporarily supply farmers in the short term.

Ministry vets are also working very closely with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) on the safe capture and feeding of the Pit Bull breed of dogs on Grand Bahama as a matter of public safety.

Ministry officials are also visiting abandoned farms to ensure that surviving animals receive immediate attention.

Officials are concerned about the impact to the apiaries on Grand Bahama and Abaco.

More than 150 hives were lost to the storm.

Bees are essential to any agricultural endeavor on Grand Bahama.

Approximately half of the bee colonies on Abaco appear to be lost, although the wide disbursement of Abaco farmers makes confirming this information difficult.

Fisheries:

Thus far, two assessments of the fisheries sector have been conducted on Grand Bahama and one on mainland Abaco.

Four damage assessment reports have also been received from Moores Island.

The total estimated damages to the fisheries sector to date, based on preliminary assessments, amount to almost \$11 Million.

Fishers have lost boats, outboard engines, fishing gear inclusive of lobster and stone crab traps, fish pots, condominiums, casitas, air compressors diving gear, rods and reels.

The land-based seafood processing facilities on both islands have also been seriously impacted with five plants on Grand Bahama and one on Abaco receiving catastrophic damage to physical plants, storage areas and inventory.

While fishers on Abaco and Grand Bahama have resumed limited operations, there is grave concern over the long-term impact of Dorian on their livelihoods.

We are very concerned about the impact on our fishers' ability to get their products to market in a safe manner as the processing plants allowed for the proper sorting, cleaning, packaging and refrigeration of seafood.

We are thankful to our private, local, and international parties, who have made offers and provided donations for both sectors.

This includes local veterinarians, CARDI, IICA, and the Friends of Sweetings Cay for their donation of boats and boat engines.

S&P Report on the Bahamas:

Mr. Speaker:

A Standard and Poors Global Ratings Bulletin was released on The Bahamas on

October 3rd, entitled: “Early Signs Suggest the Bahamas Is Well Positioned to Handle Ongoing Fallout from Hurricane Dorian”.

The Report noted: “S&P Global Ratings today said it continues to evaluate the short-to-medium-term credit effect, if any, of Hurricane Dorian on The Commonwealth of the Bahamas ...”

“Preliminary information available to us suggests that the long-term effects of the hurricane on credit quality could be limited provided that the government is able to

respond in a timely manner to the various challenges posed by the natural disaster.”

The S&P Report noted:

“While damage has been confined to two islands, they represented 15 percent to 20 percent of Bahamian GDP.

“Despite the significant damage to Abaco and Grand Bahama, several factors suggest that the long-term effects of the hurricane on The Bahamas’ credit quality could be limited.

“The hurricane struck outside of peak tourist season, and the physical damage was concentrated on two islands that together only attract 20 percent of tourists. Other destinations within the country, including Nassau, the capital and economic center, were unaffected.”

The Report further states:

“Furthermore, before the hurricane, the country had been on track to achieve good

GDP growth in 2019, slightly exceeding our forecast.

“The government also recently reported relatively strong fiscal performance in 2019 (year ended June 30).”

The Report continued:

“Based on the information currently available, the timing and location of the hurricane’s impact, and the country’s relatively strong economic and fiscal performance year to date, it is possible that

Dorian may not lead to meaningful deterioration in The Bahamas' economy, fiscal performance, debt burden, and external assessment.”

The Report also states:

“Nevertheless, this event highlights the importance of considering environmental factors in our analysis of The Bahamas, given its location in the Atlantic hurricane belt, and the large geographic dispersion of

its 700 islands over almost 14,000 square kilometers.

“In the past five years The Bahamas has been affected by at least four other serious hurricanes. We believe this elevated environmental risk has contributed to below average growth for The Bahamas, when compared with peers with similar GDP per capita.

“The Bahamas has taken steps to mitigate the risk related to increasingly frequent climate disasters by strengthening

its public finances, planning for these events, and obtaining insurance.

“Despite these efforts, vulnerability to natural disasters continues to affect the country’s credit worthiness.

“We will continue to follow the developments and pace of recovery efforts, including the government’s ability to respond to the many challenges of recovery.

“We will focus particularly on the implications for long-term economic growth,

government finances, debt burden, and the country's external position.”

The Report ends:

“We could lower the rating if we come to expect that public finances deteriorate compared with medium-term expectations, either because of the fiscal impact of the hurricane or weakened political commitment to fiscal sustainability.”

Mr. Speaker:

It is abundantly clear from this Report that the Government's disciplined fiscal strategy since coming to office stabilized public finances.

This strategy also gave the country fiscal breathing room following a series of downgrades and negative economic growth.

The Fiscal Responsibility Act is an essential component of a sustainable fiscal regime.

The natural disaster insurance strategy the Government pursued has also made an enormous difference in terms of our credit worthiness and fiscal position.

We will continue to show the political and policy commitment to fiscal responsibility required to keep The

Bahamas on a prudent and stable fiscal track.

Identification and Government

Documents:

In order to assist those affected by Hurricane Dorian to begin to put their lives back together, we are introducing a number of legislative measures.

The Hurricane Dorian (Replacement of Government Issued Documents) (Exemption from Fees) Bill, 2019, seeks to provide for the exemption of payment of fees for a temporary period by any person who on 1st September, 2019 resided in Abaco or Grand Bahama, or any cays surrounding those islands.

This legislation will enable individuals to replace certain documents that may have been damaged or lost as a result of the hurricane.

This measure covers the period 2nd September 2019, to 30th March 2020, and may be extended if necessary.

Individuals on Grand Bahama and Abaco may replace documents such as a:

- 1) passport,
- 2) police record,
- 3) drivers licence,
- 4) voters card,
- 5) National Insurance card,
- 6) birth certificate,
- 7) death certificate,

- 8) marriage certificate, and
- 9) deeds recorded at the Registrar General's Department.

Mr. Speaker:

I will provide a further communication to the House next week on additional matters of critical importance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
