



United Nations Ocean Conference 2022

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Remarks

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The Bahamas

Madame/ Mister Chair, Heads of delegation, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of The Delegation of The Bahamas, I extend my sincerest thanks to our generous hosts for the hospitality and assistance extended to me and my delegation during our stay in Lisbon.

Today, I would like to tell you a story about a place. A place in the middle of the Atlantic ocean, at the heart of the Atlantic hurricane belt. A place so remote, that one can unwind and feel a thousand miles from anywhere, but so connected that you can be almost anywhere in hours. I would like to tell you about a place, with one hundred thousand square miles of ocean, most of it protected and pristine, teeming with life. A place whose beauty is recognizable from space. Today, I've come to tell you about a nation of 400, 000, welcoming millions more by boat and plane, annually. This place ladies and gentlemen, is my home, The Bahamas.

We are home to a rich culture and an even richer biodiversity. A place where a generation ago, the once welcoming ocean fed, provided and supported our economy. Today, the ocean is angry. This is evidenced by rising sea levels, diseased and bleaching corals, increased temperatures,

reduced fisheries and catastrophic storms. For better or worse, we are inextricably linked to the ocean, in times of calm and calamity. We have built sustainable industries that are now in jeopardy of collapse, due to loss and damage and the negative impacts of climate change, poaching and unjust transitions in the global economy. Today I am here to add my voice, to the clarion calls. We must work together to promote a future for the youth of The Bahamas. A future that emphasizes decarbonization, renewable energy and marine protection. We must be singular in our focus to increase shared equity in a blue and green future, while supporting the multiple goals of guarding against environmental harm, creating good jobs, providing valuable new service and building resilience with intentional designs around the negative impacts of climate change. Greater climate adaptation and resilience will help countries like mine, mitigate and recover quickly from natural disasters and extreme weather events. In the face of the multiple crises we currently face, future-proofing efforts provide the opportunity to accelerate economic recovery, while expanding education and training to create and maintain globally competitive blue and green workforces. We must not slacken our ride.

I have come to tell you a story of an insightful and resilient people. We do not sit around and complain. We are executing now for a better future. The Government of The Bahamas in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, completed an assessment of the opportunities and enabling conditions for the development of a blue carbon offset project to help finance mangrove restoration and support coastal community resilience. Data collection and development of a pilot project are now underway. We have prioritized coral reef conservation, by endorsing long-term initiatives that facilitate the development of investment projects and businesses that contribute to resilience of coral reefs and surrounding communities in The Bahamas. We are using science and technology applications in the fisheries management processes around our main commercial fisheries of Queen conch, snapper, grouper and others, expanded our near-shore Marine Protected Area Network by over 5 million acres last July and increased the capacity of the Government to enforce the regulations with the goal of increasing overall compliance and a reduction in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by 2025. We are

meeting the challenge of this declared decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development head on.

I have come to tell you that we are a people of laws. We passed a suite of new environmental legislation, including an Environmental Planning and Protection Act that introduced criminal penalties for environmental destruction; a Ban on Selected Single-Use plastics and Styrofoam, that phased out the import of single-use plastic bags, food utensils, Styrofoam food containers and made it illegal to release balloons into the air. The passage of the Biological Resources and Traditional Knowledge Act, will regulate marine and other research and ensure the fair and equitable sharing and benefits arising out of the use of natural resources and traditional knowledge. Mangroves are now a protected species and we have modernized our Fisheries Act to provide for mandatory reporting and universal licensing.

I have come to tell you that we will not quit. No climate change, no loss, no damage, will retard our advancement in this space. We have come this week, as a part of a coalition of the willing, to lend our support and voice

to your efforts and seek support on behalf of the resilient people of The Bahamas. I thank you.