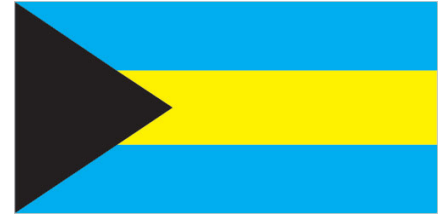




**Permanent Mission  
of the Commonwealth of the  
Bahamas to  
the United Nations**



Statement to be delivered by  
His Excellency Stan Smith  
Permanent Representative of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas  
to the United Nations

at the

United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review  
of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade  
for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018 - 2028

March 24, 2024

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen.

I join with those who spoke before me in appreciation of the efforts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Tajikistan for their leadership in convening this important and timely conference.

The Bahamas joins with the rest of the world in addressing the international agenda on water for sustainable development.

As a long archipelago – 60 miles beneath Florida and 90 miles north of the Republic of Haiti – stretched over territorial space of 100,000 square miles - The Bahamas has a water-resource profile from little to arid. Data across the archipelago is a challenge

Fresh water in The Bahamas is largely dependent on erratic rainfall. While saltwater abounds, we are limited by our access to quality freshwater because our islands are void of freshwater lakes and rivers. The Bahamas has some groundwater reserves; but is a water-scarce country.

Our communities in the Northern Bahamas – still rebuilding their lives after the devastation from Hurricane Dorian in 2019 – face the harsh reality of salt water flowing from their faucets, and know that access to water is not the same as access to clean water.

Water scarcity continues to have a significant impact on economic and social development of islands in The Bahamas. Cities - as economic engines - simply cannot develop in the absence of clean water and city-scaled sanitation.

In the face of water scarcity challenges, The Bahamas has over the past two decades implemented legislation, regulations, programs, plans and policies that address: quality; quantity; conservation; infrastructure maintenance; management; education;

area protection and restoration; and expansion of water supply, among other initiatives.

National initiatives such as:

- National Integrated Water Resource Management (NIWRM) Program, established in 2010;
- National Water Conservation Program, launched in 2012;
- National Water and Sewerage Master Plan, developed in 2013;
- The Water & Sewerage Corporation Act;

**and**

- The National Water Policy and Action Plan, 2007

are efforts in an ongoing commitment to achieving sustainable water resource management.

Mr. President

According to a World Bank report, the annual cost of providing access to basic water supply services in The Bahamas is estimated at approximately US\$22 million, and the cost of providing access to basic sanitation services is estimated at approximately US\$32 million.

We know that the cycle of water production has real costs. Most of the water services revenue in The Bahamas is spent on the purchase of water, and drastic little of revenue is spent on maintenance of water infrastructure.

Water losses - including unaccounted-for water losses - are a significant challenge for The Bahamas, particularly on the capital island of New Providence. It is worthwhile noting that a high percentage of water loss is not unique to The Bahamas, and is a common challenge among developing states. We also know that innovations in technology and science exist to turn the water crisis around.

The international community understands that innovation scaled appropriately for country development requires a sustained, huge financial commitment. This is a perennial challenge for small island developing states like The Bahamas.

In this connection, The Bahamas's economic profile is informed by GDP metrics of a tourism economy flanked by super wealthy enclaves throughout the country. It is – however – the Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index – (MVI) – which would capture the unseen economic dynamics of The Bahamas and other SIDS with acute deficiencies in basic services such as water provision.

Mr. President

In our convening this week, it is also worth pointing out the dynamic that should not widen inequitably against the wellbeing of societies: water as a commodity for profit as against the global common of water as a resource for our planetary, collective well-being.

For water-insecure Caribbean islands, the nexus of water, biodiversity, and climate is a critical priority. The Bahamas commits to improving water education and capacity-building within our island communities. And – together with The Bahamas's commitment to the Water Action Agenda, The Bahamas supports the implementation of an MVI that addresses the relevant vulnerability and resilience factors that are appropriate metrics for informing access to sustainable development.

Thank you.