



STATEMENT BY
THE PRIME MINISTER
THE RT. HON. PERRY G. CHRISTIE
UPON RETURN HOME FROM
COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF
GOVERNMENT MEETING (CHOGM)
THE VATICAN AND LONDON

22nd November 2013

I am pleased to be back home.

I wish to thank all colleagues including the Deputy Prime Minister for holding the fort in my absence.

I have just returned from an important series of interfaces abroad for and on behalf of our country. I believe that what has been accomplished will assist in bringing business to The Bahamas and thereby jobs for our people.

I believe that I deepened relations with states abroad and in the Commonwealth context in particular, The Bahamas has made its presence felt on the world scene.

While abroad we had interesting and helpful discussions on matters of direct economic benefit with governments with which we would not frequently interact, including the Prime Ministers of Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore as well as representatives of Dubai and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In this context, I believe we will see the deepening of our relations with countries in the Far East and Middle East and in the southern hemisphere.

I want to thank once again our hosts for the Heads of Government Meeting in Sri Lanka for their able conduct of the meeting in difficult circumstances and the superb hospitality extended to me and my delegation. They rose to the challenge and acquitted themselves well in the process.

My discussion with the Prime Minister of New Zealand centered around expert assistance with the introduction of a VAT system in context of an expanding economy and in the implementation of sustainable agriculture and consideration by The Bahamas of support of New Zealand's candidature for a seat on the United Nations Security Council in 2015/16.

The opportunity was taken to explore areas of cooperation and support from the new Government of Australia, including Australia's support as a member of the G20 on matters relating to The Bahamas as well regulated leading financial services jurisdiction and its accession to membership on terms favourable to The Bahamas. I shared with the Prime Minister of Malaysia and Singapore my Government's appreciation of major

investment being made by the Genting/Resorts Group. With the Prime Minister of Singapore, I discussed future areas of cooperation in air service, tourism, financial services and economic planning and related matters.

The Bahamas was also represented at the Commonwealth Investment Conference which preceded CHOGM and generated considerable interest in investment opportunities in our country.

My delegation also met in London with representatives of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency and examined collaborative projects and technical assistance that can be beneficial to The Bahamas in education, health, tourism and disaster relief.

Continuing discussions were held in London with Government and private sector representatives for Dubai and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on initiatives relating to new economic opportunities in areas such as financial services, trade airlift, yacht registration, a small luxury cruise ship operating within the Family Islands, and agriculture. In regard to the latter, I was presented with a letter of interest for a large agricultural development on Andros that would work in concert with the Agriculture Institute and be used to grow multiple staple foods and also serve as a training ground for new technologies and produce products both for local consumption and export.

You are aware of my official visit to the Holy See in Vatican City. I was pleased to have an exchange of views with the Pope and with the Secretary of State. We share a commitment to world peace and to the development of a world where each man or woman's dignity is upheld.

I took the opportunity to thank the Pope for the contribution which the Catholic Church has made to the development of The Bahamas in education, in migrant issues, in the quest for justice and the fight against HIV and Aids. I hope that we will be able to deepen official relations with the appointment of a non-resident Ambassador to the Vatican from The Bahamas shortly.

In London, I had extensive meetings with the principals of the Grand Bahama Port Authority and the Hutchison Whampoa Group, the owners of the Freeport Container Port and the largest resort developer in Grand Bahama.

As you know important decisions must be made shortly about the future of Freeport and I was happy to get the opportunity to review these matters and the government's thinking on the way forward. In wide-ranging positive discussion with Hutchison's principals, we agree to continue the dialogue on the expansion of their long term interests in Grand Bahama, through multilateral cooperation.

I had the opportunity to meet the Bahamian community in London as well and to participate along with the Minister of Transport, the Minister of Financial Services and The Bahamas Ship-owners Association in the start of the IMO Council. We discussed a major promotional event to be held in The Bahamas next year to attract and provide financial assistance for large numbers of young Bahamians to pursue careers in the maritime industry.

We took the opportunity in London and Rome to meet with other substantial groups with respect to prospective resort projects.

In London, at the Commonwealth and in Sri Lanka I was joined by the Foreign Minister, the Minister for Trade and the Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of the Prime Minister and The Bahamas High Commissioner to London.

I am happy to be back home and look forward to continuing the work for and on behalf of the Bahamian people.