

**ADDRESS**  
**BY**  
**THE HONOURABLE FREDERICK MITCHELL**  
**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION,**  
**AT**  
**THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF DIPLOMATIC WEEK**  
**THURSDAY, 23 OCTOBER, 2014**

The primary responsibility of the Government of The Bahamas is to create and maintain a social, political and economic order that would foster peace and prosperity for all its citizens.

In this regard, the dynamics of the new global political and economic order, that has developed in recent times, has obliged the Government, in general, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, in particular, to maintain a constant awareness of the outside world, and to engage in an active diplomacy, conducted, for the most part, in a wide variety of bilateral and multilateral fora.

By accepting the centrality of foreign policy with its complex of ever-evolving rules, norms and institutions, The Bahamas is advantageously poised to derive lasting benefits for national development .

We see foreign policy, in a general sense, as interaction with other Governments and international organizations, focusing on issues as diverse as crime, social welfare, national security, human rights and illegal immigration.

I have told our cadre of diplomats that their task is the advancement of Bahamian foreign policy in the interest of The Bahamas and the Bahamian people.

I have pointed out to them that, as officers of the state, they act as messengers, managers, and negotiators, among other roles.

They are expected to manage and nurture relations with other countries, while, at the same time, monitoring and guarding the interests of The Bahamas.

They have been charged with the responsibility of promoting cooperation and maintaining international partnerships with all countries, including those represented here today.

The Government of The Bahamas expects its diplomats to assist their fellow citizens in international trade, investment and cultural exchanges;

and to strengthen and sustain all efforts expended towards peace and goodwill with other countries.

Tomorrow, as the world celebrates United Nations Day, we will reflect on the fact that modern foreign policy requires an international system which makes it possible for states to pursue their interests and contribute to global civil society.

We, the generation of today, are grateful to the visionary world leaders of the recent past, who caused the United Nations to come into existence on 24 October 1945.

The Government of The Bahamas strongly believes that international cooperation plays a primary role in achieving international peace and sustainable global prosperity; and that in today's world, governments and countries must maintain good relations with their neighbours and the global community at large.

It is clear to us here in Nassau, the capital of this small island developing state, that the modern international environment renders isolation almost impossible.

We cannot act alone. The Bahamas must be a team player in regional and global strategies to confront and resolve issues and crises affecting the entire human race.

Our concerns and our objectives, here in The Bahamas, while peculiar in some ways, are not unique to ourselves but are, indeed, identical to those of the entire global community.

It is for this reason that we have invited you to participate in these few days of diplomatic discourse and exchange.

We hope that the various dialogues that will begin here will be echoed in the days and months ahead in the halls of your capitals and in the corridors of international bodies, where we will meet on a regular basis.

One such dialogue is our concern over the upsurge in The Bahamas, in recent years, in the illicit trafficking in small arms, light weapons and ammunition, which not only threatens national security but also has implications for individual safety and the social and economic well-being of the country.

It was in reaction to this threat that The Bahamas deposited its Instrument of Ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty in New York, on 25 September last.

Another discussion is the challenge of illegal immigration, which is truly a daunting one for The Bahamas, as well as the international community. Daily news releases consistently report on how unchecked immigration in other countries have led to civil strife within their borders.

Without a doubt, Bahamians perceive illegal migration as a real and present threat to national security. Meanwhile, it drains our scarce financial resources.

For this reason, again, in September in New York, The Bahamas signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Organisation for Migration to assist us in controlling these illegal flows.

Meanwhile, we maintain cordial relations with our neighbours and have entered into important initiatives with them, on matters of mutual benefit. We believe that the most effective response to illegal immigration must be multi-faceted in approach and based on cross-border efforts.

In recent months, you may have noticed that The Bahamas has increased its efforts in international initiatives relative to climate change.

This is because The Bahamas is extremely concerned by climate change, as the increased frequency of tropical storm systems could disrupt economic growth and development; and rising sea levels could lead to the submergence of some 80% of the land mass of the country.

For The Bahamas, its land and marine environment are major drivers of its wealth and survival. It believes that its natural assets, therefore, must be safeguarded and preserved for future generations of Bahamians.

We were pleased with the convening of the Climate Change Summit in September because it mobilised political will for an early and ambitious legal climate agreement, affecting the entire globe.

The Bahamas joins the international community in pursuing the widest possible cooperation on concrete initiatives that accept that environmental trends are threatening to radically alter the planet and that environmental threats and degradation can undermine economic development and may indeed be an underlying factor of world poverty.

There is a new reality; one beset by global crises and alongside which is a widespread feeling of fear and frustration concerning the global capacity to deal with the formidable international issues that threaten international peace and prosperity.

The Bahamas believes that positive developments in technology and science, for instance, and trends towards establishing partnerships and cooperative institutional arrangements, stimulate hope that the future may be more prosperous and more secure.

This will take decisive political will, concrete action and a voluntary union of all humankind.

I end by thanking you all, who have come from far and near to represent your country on the First Annual Bahamas Diplomatic Week. I hope that you enjoy your stay among us and take back with you pleasant memories.