



**STATEMENT TO THE PRESS BY
HON PRIME MINISTER
PHILIP 'BRAVE' DAVIS, QC, MP
ON HIS RETURN TO THE BAHAMAS
AFTER HIS ADDRESS TO
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE UNITED NATIONS
26TH SEPTEMBER, 2021**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Afternoon.

Thank you for being here to greet me on my return from New York.

I am happy to report that our trip was extremely productive, and on every measure, a success.

We were able to conduct bilateral discussions with 11 countries at several levels: with Heads of Government, Foreign Ministers and Ambassadors.

Discussions ranged across a number of issues of strategic importance to The Bahamas.

With Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados, we discussed ways of enhancing and strengthening our partnership in the region, particularly in the measures we adopt to support our economic recovery. As former colleagues on the Council of Legal Education, I was especially happy to reconnect with her as an old friend, and now as Heads of our respective governments.

With the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency, Antonio Guterres, we discussed issues including the continuing impacts of climate change on The Bahamas, a global strategy for securing Covid-19 vaccines, and the management of effective debt relief. As His Excellency noted, "we see eye to eye" on a number of topics.

On the specific issue of securing access to Covid-19 vaccines for Bahamians, I repeated the point I have made during the past few days. It is strongly in the interests of

the developed countries to ensure fair and equitable access to vaccines for people the world over: none of us are safe, until we are all safe!

With the Foreign Minister of Haiti, and the Permanent Representative from Haiti to the United Nations, we discussed the current crisis involving the large number of migrants who have recently landed on our southern islands.

I am especially concerned about the humanitarian impact this is having on both the migrants, and the residents of those islands.

The Foreign Minister and I were able to quickly address the technical issues involved in ensuring the safety and security of all concerned, and in arranging for the swift repatriation of the migrants.

Along with other partners in the region, we recognise that this long-term issue can only be resolved by the co-operation of all regional actors. Those discussions are ongoing.

For the time being I shall say no more in relation to this situation, until I am able to receive a full briefing from my ministers and other public officials on the ground.

In the meantime I wish to thank the Deputy Prime Minister, Chester Cooper, the Minister of Health Doctor Michael Darville, the Minister of National Security Wayne Munroe and Minister of Labour and Immigration Keith Bell, for immediately attending to this crisis, and for keeping me abreast of developments.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The central purpose of my visit was to address the General Assembly of the United Nations. I am happy to report that my statement was well-received.

I am proud at the number of Bahamians who tuned in to watch those remarks, and grateful for your many words of congratulation and encouragement afterwards.

We are working on your behalf and in your interest. Many of the challenges and opportunities of this time are global, and I hope that many more of you will continue to engage with international issues as they affect The Bahamas.

Since coming into office 10 days ago, I have said much about the importance of the partnership we have started to build with the Bahamian people.

I am happy that we have so quickly been able to widen that partnership to embrace our international friends.

Apart from the partners already mentioned, we were able to hold discussions with, among others, representatives from Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and The Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, the

United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Venezuela. We were also pleased to meet with Mr Jeffrey Sachs, the Sustainable Development Advocate for the United Nations.

Along with discussions on specific items of mutual interest, a common theme was that everyone strongly welcomes my administration's policy to return The Bahamas to more active participation in international affairs.

As is the case at home, they are also looking forward to a New Day with The Bahamas.

We were also able to meet with some of those who help to lead the organisations of Bahamians living abroad in the United States. I assured them of my government's intention to facilitate ways of keeping the members of the diaspora connected to events in The Bahamas. Though they live afar, in our hearts they will still be close to home.

As we now prepare for the major international conference on climate change to be held in Scotland in November, I am confident that we have begun to lay the groundwork, to effectively pursue our national interests.

In due course, my ministers and I will communicate in more detail about that conference.

Finally, I wish to say thank you to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Minister Mitchell, and especially Ambassador Chet Neymour and his staff at our Mission in New York.

They effectively had only five days to make all the necessary arrangements to ensure that our new administration was able to meet with such a large number and range of delegations.

In just a few short days, they managed to put in place logistical arrangements that normally take weeks.

Bahamians should be proud of the fact that some of the finest among us work in the public service, and that they are serving our country well, both at home, and around the world. I thank them for all that they do.

Members of the Press: thank you so much again for attending today. I understand that it rained heavily while we were away. I hope that you were able to get here and go back home without incident.

I am happy now to take a few questions.

END

