



STATEMENT

**BY THE
PRIME MINISTER OF THE BAHAMAS AND
CHAIRMAN OF THE CONFERENCE
OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF CARICOM
RT. HON. PERRY G. CHRISTIE,**

**AT THE
2015 HIGH-LEVEL INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE
“THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR ACTION:
PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND LESSONS LEARNED FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”**

30 MARCH 2015

I thank the President of the General Assembly for inviting me to participate in this High-Level Dialogue on the most important element for life - Water. As either island or low-lying coastal states, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Member States are highly dependent on all forms of water, socially, economically and environmentally.

Against that background we welcomed the United Nations-declared 'Water for Life' Decade which aimed to promote efforts to fulfil international commitments made on water and water-related issues by 2015.

There is a fundamental irony about small island developing states. They are surrounded by water but increasingly there is not enough to

drink. You will remember the line from Samuel Coleridge's Rime of The Ancient Mariner: "Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink." That is the living and ever present reality of many small island developing states.

From the country surveys conducted, the reports indicate that significant progress has been made in pursuit of Goal 7.C of the Millennium

Development Goals (MDG) which focuses on reducing by 2015, half the proportion of the world population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

The 2015 UN-World Water Day Report draws our attention to the UN Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which indicates that billions of people do

not have access to water that is truly safe.

Mr. President, it is acknowledged that global climate change, financial and food crises, low rates of economic growth and shortage of water resources negatively impact and undermine the efforts of the Member States aimed at achieving the internationally agreed goals on water and sanitation.

In addressing the water challenges facing the international community a new dialogue is required and the deliberations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda offer us that opportunity.

Increasingly, water is being acknowledged as a valuable resource that requires new forms of investment and modern policies to increase productivity and support

human well-being. In this context, there are growing concerns by investors and a large number of stakeholders that if left unmanaged, water would be in short supply across the globe and water scarcity would become a major economic risk compounding the challenges associated with human well-being. We in Caricom accept that reality and are ever conscious of it in our public policy.

Many CARICOM Member States for example, especially those in the southern and eastern Caribbean, have recently been experiencing extreme drought conditions which have been significantly impacting the water resources sector, as well as those socio-economic sectors that rely heavily on water as an input.

In The Bahamas, we are deeply conscious of the issue of potable water everywhere, and its availability to our population. We now depend heavily on reverse osmosis for fresh water. We are committed to supply water to our people at a reasonable cost and properly sanitized. Producing fresh water in The Bahamas has implications for the use of scarce energy resources and it drives up the expense of delivering

potable water for drinking, sanitary matters and for agriculture. In considering our renewable energy mix, one possible adjunct to this is the ability

as a side product to produce fresh water. The Bahamas is committed to the goals for delivery of clean potable water in the post 2015 era.

Indeed, Mr President, it is worth noting that in The Bahamas, we were losing around 60% of our water in

New Providence, our most populated island. And through new technology, we have reduced losses from 60% to under 35%. This has resulted in savings of close to 1 billion gallons of water, I am advised.

Mr. President, it must be underscored that there are many challenges associated with water which require action. These include action to improve water resources planning, evaluate availability and needs within

watersheds and aquifers, and reallocation or expansion of existing storage facilities. There must also be emphasis on the importance of managing water demand and developing a better balance between equity and efficiency in water use. We must put in place adequate legislative and institutional frameworks and overcome the rising financial burdens of ageing infrastructure.

The lessons learned over the past decade should guide us to an effective and comprehensive approach to availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation as we consider the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Our lives depend on it.

Thank you, Mr President.