



ECOSOC • Integration Segment (27–29 May, 2014)
SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

**BUILDING
THE FUTURE**
we WANT

COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS

Contribution to the 2014 United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Integration Segment

**2014 ECOSOC INTEGRATION SEGMENT: SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION,
27 – 29 MAY 2014, UN HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK**

THE BAHAMAS' INPUT

1. What has been the experience of your country in using urbanization as a tool for the integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development?

It is suggested that, for The Bahamas, urbanization is a naturally-occurring, economically-driven, socio-geographic force, which governments and policy can attempt to steer and deploy rather than it being a tool which is being actively used or deployed.

It is also suggested that the other critical context in which responses to all of these questions on "sustainable urbanization" should be viewed is that: The Bahamas is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) archipelago with over 700 islands in total, of which only around 20 have major centers of population. Of these 20 islands, the three (3) most populated islands (New Providence, Grand Bahama and Abaco) account for 90% of the total population. Additionally, the islands are geographically widely dispersed over an area of approximately 500 miles by 100 miles, therefore availability and cost of inter-island transport is a natural inhibitor of what may otherwise be an even greater extent of urbanization.

Economic opportunities on the Family Islands are limited, so there has been a process of migration to the major urban centers of New Providence, Grand Bahama and Abaco with around 70% of the population actually being based on New Providence. The other Family Islands struggle to hold on to their populations—particularly the young adult population who tend to migrate to the 3 main centers or to overseas destinations upon completion of formal education.

Against this background and noting that the major source of economic activity in The Bahamas is tourism, governments have historically invested in civil infrastructure focusing especially on transport issues, (especially those that either directly or indirectly support tourism such as water supply, sewerage, power and telecoms), but also with active programs of investment in infrastructure for Education, Health, and Law and Order.

Investment in transport intrinsically supports and promotes economic activity and growth. It also addresses social and environmental dimensions in that improved transport facilities promote travel and social/family well-being and interchange (especially for dispersed families), whilst also having a positive environmental impact. For instance, the removal of traffic congestion reduces levels of air and noise pollution.

In terms of a more holistic view on sustainability, urbanization (i.e. the concentration of population at a limited number of key centers) focuses all the adverse impacts of population growth on a very limited area of the overall land and sea "mass" of The Bahamas. This, in turn, ensures that developmental pressures and associated adverse environmental impacts

are geographically focused in a few locations rather than being dispersed throughout the archipelago.

Adverse effects, therefore, such as noise and air pollution from road, air, and sea traffic are concentrated and more easily addressed by focused infrastructure investment.

2. What kinds of investments have been made in your cities to make them hubs of sustainability?

Investments in cities in recent years have been primarily in transport infrastructure, with enhancements to road, air and sea connectivity. The main centers of population have also had or have plans for investment in commercial facilities (such as the Straw Market and Fish Fry), educational facilities (schools), health facilities (i.e. upgrades to hospitals), and law enforcement facilities (i.e. police stations and courts).

Economic and social benefits have, therefore, ensued with any adverse environmental impacts being limited in scope (as works are primarily executed within existing urban areas) and with environmental benefits, such as the reduction in traffic congestion, being realized by investment in road infrastructure capacity.

In respect of road infrastructure, it should now be recognized that the next step after provision of the essential physical capacity is to implement policies for demand management, as it is not physically or economically practicable to continually upgrade physical capacity to meet growing demand. Rather, policies for managing demand must be formulated and implemented.

Major Foreign Investment Projects

Major foreign investment projects Government-approved, underway or completed in The Bahamas during the past five (5) years are:

- \$3.4 billion – BAHAMA MAR Hotel, Casino and Golf Resort project – largest single phase development in the western hemisphere, New Providence
- \$140 million – Albany Resort expansion project - to include medical facilities, general medical and stem cell research and state-of-the-art financial centre, New Providence
- \$200 million – Resorts World Bimini Bay project, Bimini
- \$90 million – Club Med Hotel Resort, San Salvador
- \$30 million – The Cove, Eleuthera
- \$1.4 billion – Bakers Bay Golf and Ocean Club
- Sunwing Memories Grand Bahama Beach and Casino Resort
- \$21 million – Norman's Cay Resort – Exuma
- \$40 million – February Point Resort Estates – Exuma
- \$30 million – Leaf Cay Resort – Exuma
- \$31 million – Fortune Island Hotel and Community Resort – Crooked Island

- \$63 million – Stocking Island Resort – Exuma

Major Infrastructure and Urban Planning Projects

Major infrastructure and urban planning projects underway or completed in The Bahamas during the past five (5) years are:

New Providence Transformation and Modernization Programme

- \$210 million – public private partnership arrangement of Bahamas Telecommunications Company (BTC): Cable and Wireless and Bahamas Government. As at January 2014, present shareholding: Cable and Wireless (49%); Bahamas Government (49%); and BTC Foundation (2%)
- \$400 million – Lynden Pindling International Airport Re-development and Expansion Project
- \$290 million – New Providence Road Enhancement Project – improvement and construction of 24.6 miles of roads in 19 corridors
- \$12 million – Nassau Straw Market and Urban Park – to replace destroyed historical centre
- \$44.2 million – Nassau Harbour Dredging and Widening Project – to accommodate larger cruise ships
- \$17 million – public private partnership arrangement of Arawak Port Development Company: APD (40%); Bahamas Government (40%); and Public (20%) – construction of shipping/port facilities from Downtown Nassau to Arawak Cay
- \$30 million – construction of Thomas A. Robinson National Stadium
- \$72 million – Airport Gateway Project- construction of expanded roadway
- \$52 million – construction of Critical Care Wing at the Government-owned Princess Margaret Hospital

Family Islands Transport Sector Enhancement Project (Millions of dollars)

- Road works on: Abaco, Acklins, Eleuthera and Ragged Island
- Redevelopment and expansion of airport on North Abaco Island to ICAO Standard
- Redevelopment and expansion of airport on Bimini Island to ICAO Standard
- Redevelopment and expansion of Fresh Creek shipping dock, Andros
- Redevelopment and expansion of the Three Island Dock on Eleuthera Island
- Redevelopment and expansion of shipping dock and ferry terminal on Bimini Island
- Redevelopment and expansion of airport, construction of shipping dock and Royal Bahamas Defence Force berthing facilities on Ragged Island

3. How have you addressed specific urbanization challenges in an integrated way?

Investment in facilities to support economic growth in tourism—for example, the Nassau Harbour Dredging and Widening Project to accommodate larger cruise ships and the Lynden Pindling International Airport Re-development and Expansion Project —has been made in parallel with significant investment in associated road infrastructure, such as the New Providence Road Enhancement Project (which has reduced urban traffic congestion) and the Airport Gateway Project (which has facilitated connectivity between the airport and downtown areas and has further created economic opportunity in the airport area through improved transport links with the city center).

In parallel with these civil engineering investments: (i) buildings infrastructure has been strengthened with the completion of the new Straw Market to enhance the tourism product; (ii) an upgrade to the Welcome Centre for cruise ship tourist arrivals is now underway; (iii) plans are being made for the wider rehabilitation of the Cruise Liner docking area hard standings; and (iv) plans are being made to upgrade various building facilities, such as Customs facilities.

The regrettable increase in crime arising from urbanization and population density is being addressed through the strengthening of the court system.

The construction activity necessary for implementation of all these projects has generated local jobs. Moreover, the improved environments from new facilities such as the Straw Market and the pedestrianization of the Down Town area feed into the social and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

4. What kinds of institutional structures are in place in your country for effective governance, policy-making and planning for sustainable urbanization?

The most recent change of government led to the creation of the Ministry of Works and Urban Development, with Urban Development and Urban Renewal being created to be a distinct arm of the Ministry with its own budget and Secretariat.

5. What are some innovations and partnerships that demonstrate the power of urbanization in the integration of three dimensions of sustainable development in your country?

The Downtown Nassau Partnership is a private/government partnership which continues to promote environmental improvements to the downtown landscape with benefits to the commercial (economic) sectors and corresponding local areas, and where social benefits also accrue due to improved facilities for leisure and shopping. E.g. around the Pompey Museum and along Woodes Rogers Wharf.