



Commonwealth of The Bahamas Statement

By

The Honourable Frederick A. Mitchell, M.P.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Public Service

at the

United Nations Summit of the Future

Monday, 23 September 2024

United Nations Headquarters

New York

Mr. President

This is a valuable forum for the discussion of our planet, in many senses, the future of mankind. We are more than halfway there to the year 2030 when the world through this body pledged to attain goals that would leave no one behind. This remains a laudable goal. It is clear that we will not reach in 2030 the goal to which we aspire, but the goal is laudable all the same.

For The Bahamas, there remains an immutable truth. That truth is that people are more important than things. As an extension of that, we believe that all peoples, each human being, each species, and each culture, has a right to exist.

The historians tell us that this is a relatively recent development in the history of mankind, the view each person has a soul, a culture, a space, and an entitlement on the planet. The doctrine is espoused far and wide, but again, the goal - though laudable - has fallen short in reality.

As we look around today, there are wars and rumours of war. Some countries have marched into other countries and claimed the space as their own, simply because their troops are standing all over the land. We all ascribe to the UN charter on territorial integrity, but the goal - though laudable - has fallen short. Ask the people from Ukraine, to Gaza , to Cyprus, to Sudan, if they believe that the international system as it is, values the charter and the beliefs therein described.

At one time, and to some extent today, people invaded or discovered other peoples and nations and claimed them in the name of the Lord. They then decimated the people they met on the land and divided up the spoils. That was the founding principle that allowed the millions of African slaves to be transported across the seas as cargo and chattel to small islands, displacing local populations. That is how my fellow Bahamians and I got to be in the place called The Bahamas. We have made it thus far by faith.

However, as science has developed, some have argued that science is the new religion. The argument is that if you look at the history of human beings on the planet, there has been a march toward the view that there is no supra human deity that controls the affairs of women and men but we ourselves. It goes further now, the argument is that there is nothing in particular which sets human beings aside, and that the machines that we have created will one day be able to do what we do - and that is to rule the world. One author described this state of affairs in a work called Homo Deus.

Carl Sagan, the American astronomer, has a widespread video that shows the earth in far relief from outer space. It is a blue dot. And he describes that we are - as far as we know - all alone on that blue dot in the loneliness of space; and from that standpoint, where there are no boundaries that can be seen, he argues compellingly that this is why we have to work together to resolve the issues of our survival. It is still all that we have.

Another Scientist argues that the one thing about science is that whether you believe it or not, it is true.

I refer again to the immutable truth: earth is all we have, and we are all in this together - for good or ill.

The age of discovery that wrought the systems that we have today is still at work. Countries are now reaching out into the void of space and seeking to carve up in national names the resources of that void. This is what appears as we land on Mars and on the moon. We argue and give lip service to the creed that it belongs to all mankind, but the doctrine of “I got there first, so it is mine” still applies as far as we the smaller countries who have not gotten there can see. If we scale back then to the immutable logic of what that means, it means that we who do not have the resources are expendable, and power is the only fact.

Fifty years ago , on 18 September 1973, the Commonwealth of The Bahamas raised its flag here at this body. Our then Prime Minister Lynden Pindling committed our country to the charter and its provisions. We accepted and believe today under the present Prime Minister Philip Davis that we have no choice but to believe and subscribe and support the charter and to recommit ourselves today to global governance. We believe and recommit ourselves to the shared nature of the resources of the earth.

We superintend 100,000 square miles of water. We superintend 4,000 square miles of land. We are about 400,000 people. This is not even a small village in some of the great, populous states in the world. We fight, though, for the right to exist in the land that we now occupy and govern. We are tenacious about it. We pay tribute to the people who were there before us and mourn their loss. We fight to establish a viable economy that can survive on moral principles, but we have found that many nations talk the talk but can not walk the walk.

The nations of the Pacific are facing the existential threat of climate change. Those who are responsible have not stepped up to the plate as they should with money and material. The same can be said for the Caribbean. The commitments have been observed more in the breach than fulfillment.

I said yesterday to one of the world leaders that every time the Caribbean region tries to use the provisions of the market to save ourselves, the response from the powerful is to use their laws and other forms of coercion to ensure that our innovations in the market do not succeed. They often use the moral principle that they are preventing money laundering or tax evasion or some other invented evil. But morality works both ways: when actions result in penury, poverty and displacement, and you are unable after all the blandishments and niceties at fora such as these, - to get any world leader on the phone, and you realize we are in trouble. Shakespeare wrote the words: help me Casius ere I sink

So I end here with a recommitment to this body, to the Pact for the Future. We have no choice. I ask delegates to forgive the circumlocution, but it is what it is. We are confident that humans have a soul, a right to exist, and a god-given right to all resources of the earth, sea, and sky, - all humanity, not some. There must be a guiding moral and ethical principle to underline all that we do and say going forward to 2030 and beyond. That is why we say today, now more than ever, we need the United Nations.

End