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**INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE
CONTROL COMMISSION**

CICAD

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

**SIXTIETH REGULAR SESSION
November 2-4, 2016
Nassau, The Bahamas**

**OEA/Ser.L/XIV.2.60
CICAD/doc.2277/16
November 2, 2016
Original: English**

**Statement by Hon. Dr. Bernard J. Nottage, M.P., Minister of National
Security of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas at the CICAD 60th
Regular Session Inauguration Ceremony**

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Rt. Honorable Perry Christie, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Mr. Luis Almagro, Secretary General, Organization of American States, Ms. Angela Crowdy, Assistant Executive Secretary CICAD, CICAD Secretariat Staff, Member States, visiting delegates, meeting observers and local stakeholders, Good Morning.

The Bahamas is grateful for the opportunity to host this Sixtieth Regular Session of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). This gathering is significant because this year CICAD commemorates its Thirtieth Anniversary. We congratulate the Organization of American States (OAS) for seeing it imperative to establish a branch with the responsibility to promote regional partnerships and coordination among member states to reduce drug production, trafficking and use of illicit drugs, while addressing public health, social and criminality of the drug trade.

Over the past four (4) decades, The Bahamas has been on the frontline of drug control reduction efforts and has committed itself to weakening the illicit drug enterprises that exist around us regionally and globally. Even though The Bahamas is not a major producer of illicit drugs, our country is strategically situated within the transshipment zone between markets in North America and Europe. Due to our sparsely populated archipelago and vast water borders, transnational criminals, including some Bahamians, continue to traffic drugs within our maritime borders' and ports of entry.

Cocaine and marijuana, the signature drugs produced in the region, are the principle drugs in the transit traffic into and through The Bahamas. Despite best efforts drugs continued to appear on our streets and within communities impacting the most vulnerable among us, in particular our youth.

There is an intrinsic link between our nation's national security challenges and the illicit drug trade. Let me refer, in particular to the serious challenges stemming from arms trafficking, human trafficking, and illegal immigration. These illicit activities particularly arms trafficking, a definite offshoot of the drug trade tend to sit on the platform created by drug trafficking. Consequently, a single trafficking exercise may now involve drugs, guns and illegal migrants. However, we have determined that drug trafficking, crime and criminality should not jeopardize the economic, social and political stability and development of our country.

In the aftermath of the United Nations Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS) 2016, the current drug policies of The Bahamas have focused on an appropriate balance between the traditional law enforcement approaches and alternative development programmes, including public health initiatives.

Partnerships have been vital in countering the challenges of illicit drugs. The United States, a strategic partner through its International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) Section and Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) has provided funding, training, and technical assistance to local law enforcement and justice sector officials.

Another strategic alliance is Operation Bahamas and Turks and Caicos (OPBAT) which was established as a multi-agency international drug interdiction effort, focused on impeding the flow of illegal drugs from South America, the Caribbean, Turks & Caicos, The Bahamas, and the United States.

The government of The Bahamas has launched the “Citizen Security and Justice Program”. Key among this \$20 million project’s objectives is the treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders, including those serving time for drug related offences. In addition, The Bahamas also anticipates the establishment of Drug Treatment Courts to provide an alternative to incarceration for drug-dependent offenders through treatment and rehabilitation.

Since youths are overwhelmingly represented as both victims and perpetrators of drug related crime and violence, The Bahamas has embarked on a series of initiatives focused on at risk youth, these include the establishment of community youth centres which will provide healthy alternative services and programmes. Youth participating will receive training in hospitality, self-esteem building, motivational and personal development. These centres will be a space where youth can go as an alternative to idleness, joining gangs or engaging in conflict with the law.

Finally, I give my full assurances that the Bahamas is a willing and committed partner and confident that underpinning the discussions of this 60th Regular Session, the resolve is united to improve the effectiveness of our responses to the drug problem, in the mutual interest of all member states. It is our hope that this 60th Session will intensify our efforts in addressing the world drug problem, by providing meaningful and productive discourse and information.

Delegates and distinguished guests, I asked that we all stand as we receive the Right Honorable Perry G. Christie, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.