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**REMARKS BY THE HON. RENWARD R. WELLS**  
**MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MARINE RESOURCES OF THE BAHAMAS**  
**40<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION**  
**ROME, ITALY**

Mr Chairman, your Excellences, delegates,

Members,

Good morning.

Mr. Chairman I wish to congratulate you on your election.

The theme for this 40<sup>th</sup> Conference, '*Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security*' is aligned with the development priorities of The Bahamas, which are poverty elimination, food and nutrition security, sustainable resource management and promoting resiliency to climate change. These priorities are outlined in our country's Country Programme Framework 2016-2019.

Mr. Chairman,

The elimination of poverty as articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals is an important policy priority of The Bahamas. The poverty profile indicates that: young people, households headed by women and people living in rural communities are inordinately impacted by poverty. These persons must benefit from initiatives that improve their livelihoods. Initiatives such as on-farm and off-farm activities which in the case of The Bahamas, link them to value-added products and the tourism sector.

The Bahamas, like many other Small Island Developing States faces the ‘triple burden’ of malnutrition, under nutrition and obesity. A 2012 survey indicated that the population consumes limited amounts of fruit and vegetables which is one of the contributors to the rise in non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease. Last year the ‘Healthy Bahamas Coalition’ comprising of private sector stakeholders such as insurance companies, pharmacies, physicians and other allied health workers along with The Bahamas’ Chamber of Commerce began working together to empower people and communities to adopt healthier lifestyles. I am pleased to report that the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources is a partner ministry in this initiative, and we have undertaken nutrition counselling and health screenings for all staff as a part of a ‘Wellness in the Workplace Initiative’.

In support of this policy focus, I would like to thank FAO for their assistance in preparing the draft Food and Nutrition Security Policy and Action Plan which focuses actions targeting households and communities to encourage them to make transformative changes in their food and lifestyle choices. We look forward to continued support from FAO to develop evidence-based monitoring systems and to share best practices on supporting smallholder farmers and encouraging youth entrepreneurship.

Mr Chairman,

With regards to resource management, the fisheries sector is an important part of the economy. Fisheries exports are estimated at USD 75 million annually and comprise 28 percent of exports from The Bahamas. FAO has been a very important partner in the development of fisheries legislation, working with public, private sector stakeholders and non-governmental organizations to improve fisheries and sustainability management.

Finally, I must address the issue of climate change. Over the period 1980 – 2010, The Bahamas has experienced 13 natural disasters (hurricanes and flooding) resulting in 19 fatalities and estimated total economic damage of near USD 3.2 billion. The Bahamas was hit in 2015 and again in 2016 with Hurricanes Joaquin and

Matthew which impacted the entire archipelago resulting in combined estimated damages of up to USD 1.5 billion.

Climate change for all SIDS like The Bahamas, is about building resilience in agriculture, fisheries and forestry. Efforts have been made to mainstream climate change adaptation measures into the sustainable resource strategies for each of these sectors and to encourage actions that would reduce the vulnerability of the natural and human systems to the impacts of climate change. Nearly 80% of The Bahamas is under some form of vegetative cover. And indeed, the careful management of our forests is an important part of our climate strategy. Moreover, developing partnerships inside and outside the country are important to raise awareness of the impact of climate change and to move people to action. In this regard, we are particularly interested in FAO being a conduit to sharing experiences and best practices on resilience measures for rain-fed small farmer, livestock and crop systems.

I wish to thank the Government and people of Italy for hosting this Conference, the Director-General and technical staff of FAO for their support.

Thank you.