

REMARKS DELIVERED BY THE HONOURABLE
LYNDEN O. PINDLING, PRIME MINISTER OF
THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS ON THE
OCCASION OF THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE BAHAMAS
TO MEMBERSHIP OF THE UNITED NATIONS
[1] SEPTEMBER, 1973

MR. PRESIDENT:

I have the signal honour on behalf of the people of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas to express to you and to all distinguished delegations the warm-hearted thanks of the people of The Bahamas for the admission of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas to Membership of the United Nations Organisation. I would wish to thank all the members of the Security Council which unanimously approved the application of The Bahamas for admission to the United Nations, those Member States which have so generously and readily sponsored our application for Membership and, additionally, the Special Committee On the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, more commonly known as the Committee of Twenty-four, which has consistently promoted the rights of the people of small territories in particular "to self-determination and Independence, and has urged that steps be taken to translate these rights into realities".

I am also pleased to acknowledge the friendly good wishes and welcome the Commonwealth of The Bahamas has received from members of the United Nations upon assuming its place on July 10th past in the Community of Independent Sovereign States.

I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the esteemed office of President of the General Assembly, the functions of which I am certain you will discharge honourably and with traditional objectivity.

Mr. President, Sir, it was on 12 October, 1492 that Christopher Columbus re-discovered this Hemisphere by landing on the Island of San Salvador in The Bahamas. Today, 481 years later, the Commonwealth of The Bahamas is being admitted to membership of the United Nations Organisation having travelled a long, dark, frustrating yet fascinating journey through the dehumanising experiences of Slavery and Colonialism to Sovereign Independence.

It was on 29 September, 1729 that the first elected legislative body, once called the General Assembly of the Bahama Islands, came into existence and met for the first time in The Bahamas. Today 244 years later, The Bahamas takes its place and meets for the first time in this august and distinguished General Assembly.

It was on the 23 August, 1965 that a Petition on The Bahamas was presented to the Special Committee of Twenty-four of the United Nations Organisation. That petition, circulated as Document A/AC/109/Pet.377 sought majority rule for The Bahamas and a "positive-programme of preparedness by which Bahamians can be trained to assume and manage their own affairs at all levels". Today, 8 years later, The Bahamas takes its place as a member of that Organisation, majority rule having been established and Bahamians having been trained to manage their own affairs.

During all of the intervening years of continuous constitutionally elected authority, The Bahamas has undergone constant evolution in an entirely peaceful atmosphere, without violence; and we are proud to have achieved revolutionary political changes by this method. As a new nation, The Bahamas in its relationship with the rest of the world will adhere to its commitment to ordered, reasoned, unemotional and evolutionary progress, dominated by the deeply held religious beliefs of its people and their commitment to the Rule of Law.

The entire area of land and sea over which The Bahamas claims jurisdiction is approximately 100,000 square miles, about 94% of which is sea. We in The Bahamas claim this area,

with uncharacteristic immodesty but with accuracy, to be the most beautiful archipelago in the world. From our extremities in the North-west to our extremities in the South-east, the Islands and Cays span 760 miles and a look at the map will show you that the proximity of these Islands to each other is analogous to stepping stones, it being physically and engineeringly possible to link up more than one group in the chain.

Although we who inhabit the islands of the Bahamian Archipelago are predominantly black, we are also of many other colours and of varied faiths and all of us have similar aspirations and expectations as those of the billions of other people who inhabit this Planet Earth. We wish to live in peace; we wish to satisfy the needs, both spiritual and physical of our own people; we wish to be neither dominated nor coerced; and we wish to create a society built on the sound foundation of constitutional authority. We wish also to be free from interference in the conduct of our affairs, but we wish to enjoy the friendship and benefit from the association, wisdom and experience of those who wish to be our friends and respect our freedom as we want and know it.

We believe that we can make a contribution to a better international understanding by sharing our experiences in human relations in effecting change without disorder, revolution without bloodshed and in developing a stable economic and social order. We of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas are aware that it is indeed unrealistic to think that Nation States can exist in isolation. No man, no Nation is an island unto itself. There is need for perpetual interdependence of the Big and the Small which will guarantee the perpetuation of the United Nations as the centre for the harmonisation of the actions of nations concerned with international peace and security, equality and freedom, economic and social justice for all peoples.

While man is reaching dramatically into the infinite limits of outer space and the fascinating confines of ocean depths, he is also prosaically reaching into his own mind to re-assess his global value-system which has yet to acknowledge that a world dominated by power politics and calculated alignments of self-interest and fear is less important than a world morality as expressed in the Charter of the United Nations. The Commonwealth of The Bahamas subscribes to the concept of alignments of States having in common respect for human and spiritual values rooted in the belief in the absolutely indivisible freedom of the mind of man.

The Commonwealth of The Bahamas enters the United Nations in the closing decades of the 20th Century. We came late, but having arrived, we pledge to abide by the obligations imposed upon us as a Member of the United Nations Organisation; and we shall not shrink from our responsibilities as an active member of this institution. We have no delusions of grandeur about the influence an Independent Bahamas may have on world events, but we believe that this Organisation and its collective influence can hold, promote and guarantee peace and protect mankind from the capacity for its destruction which some enjoy.

On our part, we have no capacity to wage war, yet we realise that Peace is not an end in itself, but that Peace provides man with the opportunity to share the wealth of the earth in such fashion that all its people will enjoy the objectives of the Charter of the United Nations.