



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Concluding observations on the combined initial to fifth
periodic reports of the Bahamas**

Addendum

**Information provided by the Bahamas in follow-up to the
concluding observations***

[Date received: 25 July 2014]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 20 and 24 of the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women — [CEDAW/C/BHS/CO/1-5](#)

1. Temporary Special Measures

The Government of The Bahamas, through the Bureau of Women's Affairs, will implement temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of women aspiring to political leadership.

In the last General Election, May 2012, 22 (16.5%) of the total 133 candidates were women and five (23%) of the 22 were successful. Presently there are no statistics to show the total number of women who voted versus the total number of men. However, the Organization of American States' (OAS) Report on the 2012 elections, revealed that 18,574 more women than men registered to vote. Per party, the number of women who were selected as candidates were as follows: Progressive Liberal Party, 33 men, 5 women (15%); Free National Movement, 29 men, 9 women (31%), Democratic National Alliance, 32 men, 6 women (19%); Independent candidates, 14 men, 0 women; Bahamas Constitution Party, 3 men, 2 women (67%).

Historically, women in The Bahamas voted for the first time on November 26, 1962 and in 1969 a woman was first appointed to the Cabinet. Twenty years later, in August 1982, the first woman was elected to Parliament and thirty years later in 1992 three women were appointed to the Cabinet in an independent Bahamas. In 2002, a woman was appointed Deputy Prime Minister for the first time and had responsibility for the Ministry of National Security.

While there has been a low percentage of women nominated for political leadership or successful in winning their candidacy over these many years, a mapping of women in leadership in The Bahamas, compiled by the Bureau, for the years 2004, 2009 and 2014, revealed that women have consistently held high percentage leadership positions in areas such as Magistrates, Permanent Secretaries, Judiciary Registrars, Hospital Administrators and High School Principals (see attached).

In The Bahamas, the scales are tipped in favour of men when it comes to political leadership, experience and mentorship. In recent times activities have been held to encourage more women to become involved in this field. In November 2013, during National Women's Week, the Bureau invited a former female Premier of Bermuda as their special guest. She made several presentations on women in political leadership both in the nation's capital, Nassau and the nation's second city Freeport, on the island of Grand Bahama. For International Women's Day 2014, the focus was again on "Women in Leadership," where young women as well as more experienced women shared their leadership experiences with female high school students as well as women from all sectors of society. In May of this year, women from Non-Governmental Organizations and those interested in political leadership participated in the first day of the deliberations of a two day meeting of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) held in Nassau, Bahamas. The goal of CWP is to promote increased participation of women in parliament.

In an effort to accelerate the achievement of de facto equality for women in political leadership, the Bureau of Women's Affairs in partnership with other stakeholders, will implement the following temporary special measures, between

August 2014 and August 2015, to adequately prepare potential female candidates for the next General Election in 2017:

- (a) Targeted training in such areas as campaigning, fundraising, issues affecting women, balancing family and public life, parliamentary procedure, the public service, etc.
- (b) Mentorship by former/present female Parliamentarians and Cabinet Ministers
- (c) Encourage women in political parties to advocate for more women to be nominated as candidates
- (d) Lobby women's groups and women in general to vote for women in the next General Election
- (e) Encourage women entrepreneurs to support female candidates
- (f) Involve men as advocates in promoting temporary special measures for women in political leadership and educating them about gender equality and ending gender based violence.

The Bureau of Women's Affairs has requested technical assistance from the Caribbean Regional Office of UN-Women in carrying out these temporary special measures and will report on the outcome of these measures in its next periodic report to be submitted by July 2016.

2. Violence against Women

(a) Comprehensive law addressing Violence against Women.

In July 2013 the Government of The Bahamas put in place a timely initiative to confront the issue of Gender Based Violence. This initiative incorporates an Oversight Committee made up of key ministries with responsibility for different dimensions of Gender Based Violence. The six (6) ministries include Social Services, Health, National Security, Education, the Office of the Attorney General and Youth. It also includes a steering committee or Task Force made up of key governmental and non-governmental agencies. The mandate of the Task Force is to prepare implement and coordinate a National Strategic Plan to address Gender Based Violence.

This Task Force has included in it's a recommendation for the adoption of a comprehensive anti-Gender Based Violence Law that will incorporate intimate partner sexual violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment and include all forms of violence against women.

(b) Creating awareness on the criminal nature of marital rape and the criminalization of marital rape.

The Ministry of Social Services & Community Development has an ongoing campaign, "Domestic Violence is Everybody's Business" with presentations to churches and community groups.

The Bahamas Crisis Centre, a Non-Governmental Organization, has received an international grant for a "Let's Talk" Campaign which targets youth 16 to 25 years. This campaign incorporates marital rape, incest, acquaintance rape, bullying and bystander behaviour.

Additionally, a short film, titled “Full Circle,” has been launched and is to be followed by public service announcements on these issues and shown in the community through the electronic and print media over the next 12 months. A pre and post survey is being utilized to evaluate the impact of the public service announcements on the community.

The Ministry also supported the production of a docu-drama on Domestic Violence by FUJON, a local film company, entitled “*GET OUT*.”

(c) Comprehensive plan that addresses all forms of Violence against Women and Girls and a strategy for its implementation.

The Task Force on Gender Based Violence which was appointed in July 2013 has been assigned the task of developing a strategic plan and initiatives to address Gender Based Violence in all its forms. This is in progress and it is anticipated that this will be followed by an implementation plan and the establishment of a multi-sectoral mechanism to manage that implementation.

(d) Speedy access to justice for women victims of all forms of Gender Based Violence.

The Attorney General has implemented a “Swift Justice” initiative in that office to address the delays in victims access to justice. Special emphasis has been given to an analysis of sexual offences and a consultant has been employed in that Ministry to address this back log of cases and facilitate speedier access to justice for victims. A specific Sexual Offences Unit has now been established within the Department of Public Prosecutions and a case management process implemented to ensure that these cases are addressed effectively.

The Voluntary Bill of Indictment has now replaced the preliminary inquiry process, eliminating the need for a rape victim to undergo the stress of two trials.

(e) Provide adequate assistance and protection to women victims of violence in particular psychosocial rehabilitation and an adequate number of shelter facilities, including in the Family Island.

Shelter and residential care for women victims of violence continue to be a challenge because of the archipelagic nature of The Bahamas. However, The Government, in its 2014-2015 budget, has allocated substantial funding for a home that will accommodate women with boys over 10 years.

The Ministry of Social Services and Community Development has relaunched its Domestic Violence Unit in the Family Services Division. This unit is expected to play a significant role in increasing access to psychosocial rehabilitation for victims of violence.

(f) Comprehensive statistical data on violence against women disaggregated by sex, age and relationship between the victim and perpetrators, including data on the number of complaints, prosecutors and convictions, and on the sentences imposed on perpetrators of sexual and Gender Based Violence.

The Bahamas has received funding from the Caribbean Regional Office of UN-Women to implement a project “Strengthening State Accountability and Community Action for ending Gender Based Violence”. This project focuses specifically on reducing violence against women through strategies of increasing actor competencies and strengthening accountability and includes consultancies to

put together base line data in the policing and prosecution of sexual offences and has enabled a compilation of data that enhances our understanding of the issue as well as the number of complaints, convictions and sentences.

Prominent among the recommendations of the Gender Based Violence Task Force is the establishment of an observatory which will enable the collection of disaggregated data and better understanding the problem.
