



Office of  
**the Prime Minister**

Remarks of the Commissioning of the Ragged Island Solar MicroGrid Project

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PRIME MINISTER & MINISTER OF FINANCE

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> August 2022

Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning.

I want to begin by thanking the people of Ragged Island for their warm invitation to the delegation here today.

It would be easy to make a day like today about the wonders of technology, or the horrors of climate change – and surely those are crucial parts of the story.

But I think today is first and foremost about *people*:

The people of Ragged Island, whose resilience and whose commitment to their community and to each other has meant hanging on through some very hard times.

The people – the many people – who worked to make today possible – local residents, non-profits, the private sector, and government policy-makers and workers, too. I have to include my Deputy Prime Minister here; Chester Cooper has been a tenacious advocate for the people of Ragged Island.

And today is also about *all* the people of The Bahamas, who recognize that small communities in our Family Islands are an essential thread in our

national fabric and deserve our robust commitment and support.

Friends, today was a long time coming.

Too long, in fact.

We can celebrate, and we should, but surely we should also acknowledge that today should have come a lot sooner. Hurricane Irma came through in 2017.

The people here have always kept it real with me, so we need to keep it real with them.

So now when I say there are a lot of reasons to be hopeful about Ragged Island's future, and the future of solar energy in The Bahamas, you know I mean that.

And the reasons for my optimism are right in front of you – the extraordinary teamwork and partnerships that have made these solar powered microgrids possible.

Let's back up a moment. When I was the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Works, we built a National Energy Policy that recognized the importance and the urgency of transitioning to a

cleaner, greener, more affordable and more efficient energy sector.

Every family and every business in The Bahamas knows that energy costs are too high, service is too unreliable, and past promises of progress haven't panned out.

And every Bahamian knows that climate change is a real threat – not in some distant future, but right now. If there was ever any doubt, Irma and Dorian erased those doubts with a vengeance. And as we continue our advocacy on the world stage for change – including an important meeting for regional governments which we will host right here in our country next week – we need to walk the walk, too. We contribute a tiny, tiny percentage of the world's emissions, but we are going to be part of climate solutions in many ways in the years to come, including by keeping our own commitment to generate at least 30% of our energy from renewable sources by 2030.

This investment in Ragged Island means greener energy and less dependence on subsidies, and crucially – it means more resilience in the face of future hurricanes.

As the experts at the Rocky Mountain Institute will tell you, microgrids can keep the lights on even when the central grid is down. That means solar power is not just renewable but *resilient*.

The cost of generating power on our Family Islands has always been too expensive and too inefficient, and driven high prices across the board, making it hard for families to keep afloat and hard for businesses to survive and compete. Added to that, we're now living through a global inflationary crisis that has made diesel – and nearly everything else -- even more expensive.

The cost of living in The Bahamas is just too high.

So implementing our National Energy Policy is the right thing to do, and the smart thing to do. As we outlined in our Blueprint for Change, renewable energy can help us diversify our economy. It can bring much-needed relief on costs to families and businesses. And it can keep the lights on when more traditional grids would fail.

In the Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, we're working hard to expand renewable energy, an expansion in part made possible by an IDB-funded loan of \$80 million and a \$9 million EU-CIF grant.

We will invest more than \$36 million in renewable infrastructure in Abaco and East Grand Bahama. The focus of this investment in Abaco will include \$18 million for the restoration of electricity services and the rehabilitation of physical infrastructure damaged by Hurricane Dorian. We will also invest 4.5 million in the installation of five microgrids in East End Grand Bahama.

Our commitment to cleaner energy is nationwide. We are investing 14.2 million dollars in installing a 25 MW Battery Energy Storage System at the Bailou Hill Power Plant. Additionally, our Administration will budget \$1.9 Million for our solar rooftop program, so that clinics, public libraries and schools can be part of our nation's renewable energy progress. I am excited to announce that the Ministry of Public Works is assessing eight government buildings for this programme.

And we've earmarked more than \$35 million for the installation of solar photovoltaic systems in the Family Islands; feasibility studies for Inagua, Mayaguana, Acklins, Crooked Island, Long Cay and North Andros have all been concluded.

Friends,

We deserve an energy system at least as resilient as our incredible people.

Together, we're going to build a cleaner, more affordable, more reliable energy future.

May God Bless You, And May God Bless The Bahamas.

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