



Office of the
Prime Minister

REMARKS TO THE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION SUMMIT, 2022

**PRIME MINISTER HON. PHILIP E. DAVIS KC, MP CONVENTION CENTER
BAHA MAR RESORT
CABLE BEACH**

13 OCTOBER 2022

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We know about Disaster. We know what it is like to live in a world where every year, we brace ourselves for possible catastrophe.

We know all too well the utter devastation a hurricane can bring to our shores.

On September 1st 2019, a devastatingly unprecedented Category Five hurricane made landfall in Abaco and then Grand

Bahama. That was a terror the likes of which we'd never seen before.

Hurricane Dorian was, by all accounts, a freak hurricane—a product of an ever-warming planet. Global climate change is precipitating major shifts in weather patterns and setting the context for a world rife with unpredictable storm activity. It is us, low lying island nations across the hurricane, tornado and typhoon belt of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans who are most vulnerable.

Few can provide a better firsthand account of the toll that natural, biological, and other climate-driven hazards have on small island nations like The Bahamas.

Hurricane Dorian took many lives, and nearly decimated Abaco's economy. Our entire world reeled in the aftermath. If this were not enough, we were then confronted with Covid 19, the worst respiratory illness pandemic the world has seen since 1918. We have suffered. We had two trying years of

economic setback and social hardship on the heels of these major crises.

The United Nations General Assembly has declared today, October 13, the International Day for Disaster Risk reduction. Initiatives like this are crucial to advancing the charge for a world where extreme loss and tragedy are tempered and mitigated by implementing innovative response strategies and early warning measures.

Today, on this International Day of Disaster Risk Reduction, we highlight the commitment and collective action of not only the Bahamian people, but of many countries worldwide in reducing devastation, loss of life, and economic setbacks resulting from disasters.

We are not alone in facing these challenges. Our friends, family, partners, and colleagues around the world face similar challenges.

This rings especially true for our friends and

partners from the University of Hawaii's Pacific Disaster Center (PDC) who have been by our side and on the ground to support responses to Hurricanes Dorian, Joaquin, and Matthew.

Faced with similar challenges, The Bahamas and PDC are looking beyond reactionary measures to forge novel ways of thinking and doing in response to disaster. To this end, today we will sign an MOU between

the University of The Bahamas and the University of Hawaii.

We have also recently completed a National Disaster Preparedness Baseline Assessment (NDPBA) in partnership with the PDC. The national baseline assessment provides a localized, detailed assessment of risk for each of the Family Islands.

It offers fresh insights to help meet the critical needs of each island and bolster our

comprehensive national strategy for disaster management and mitigation. PDC's national baseline assessment program is not merely recognized by the Bahamian government, but internationally by the United Nations and received first place in the Sasakawa Award for Disaster Risk Reduction earlier this year.

The program provides a global model for translating complex risk information into

meaningful disaster management policy,
planning, and action.

These efforts support our Blueprint for
Change, which details aggressive actions to
kick start transformation in our economy
and the way we recover and rebuild. We are
especially concerned with securing a
sustainable, dignified and resilient future for
all.

The partnership between University of The Bahamas and the University of Hawaii will allow us to undertake joint scientific research between our institutions to promote sustainable solutions to help our island states better adapt to the impending crisis we both face.

Climate change is a slow onset mega disaster that threatens the entire globe and it requires a scientific foundation of

knowledge to ensure that policy and actions are rooted in evidence.

We can no longer afford to view ourselves in isolation from others, or act without reliable information.

We must work together across national borders to create a common scientific foundation, to maximize our collective efforts to build safer, more resilient communities.

The Bahamas is proud to be at the frontier of this scientific approach with the University of Hawaii and PDC. We aim for this work to benefit not only our island states, but all nations around the globe.

Hurricane Dorian put us to the test—we faced that monstrous storm and suffered terribly. In our little island country, we say: When you know better—do better.

The government of the Bahamas is staunchly committed to doing all it can to implement effective disaster prevention measures and we are thankful to our partners at the PDC for their willingness and enthusiasm toward the same.

Thank you.