

DIVISIONS OF THE MINISTRY

ADMINISTRATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

The Administration and Human Resources Division (AHRD) is responsible for the implementation of policies established by relevant authorities relating to the organisational, administrative and human resources matters of the Ministry (Headquarters and Missions and the Passport Office).

AHRD is also responsible for recommending to the Permanent Secretary policies (regarding human, physical and financial resources and issues and relevant systems e.g., information systems) that would improve the organization, administration and operations of the Ministry, Missions and Passport Office.

AFRICA/ASIA/EUROPE

Overview

The Africa, Asia and Europe (Bilateral Relations) Division (AAED) attends to all bilateral matters pertaining to the relations between The Bahamas and countries in Africa, Asia and Europe. The Division also attends to bilateral matters with all countries in the other regions in the world except for those in the Western Hemisphere (North, Central and South America, and the Caribbean).

Mandate

The mandate for the AAED is to promote and further the development of The Bahamas' bilateral relations with the countries comprising the African Continent, Asia and the European Union, as well as those countries and regions that, under certain geographic and other affiliations, are linked technically to the previous, including the Middle East, the Pacific and Oceania. The focus of the Division is on the political, economic, scientific, social and cultural spheres, generally, including on crosscutting issues pertaining to the said spheres. The overall task of the Division is to assist with the formulation of a policy framework for improving existing external relations, and developing new strategic relations with those countries outside the normal ambit of The Bahamas' external interactions. It does so by monitoring developments, providing analyses and policy proposals on related issues, and preparing and maintaining briefs.

CONSULAR DIVISION

The Consular Division is responsible for the issuance of visas and authentication of documents for use in foreign countries, both are revenue earning services. The Division is also responsible for; the issuance of diplomatic and official passports, and administration of the control system of release and return for official passports; liaising with those British Consulates General abroad which render visa and other consular services on behalf of The Bahamas Government; and registration of Bahamian students studying abroad.

The wide range of services that the Consular Division performs also include the management of matters related to the deportation of Bahamians from abroad, particularly from the United States; the welfare of Bahamian prisoners abroad, particularly those in Cuba; and Bahamians in distress. The head of the Division also chairs the Passport Office Investigative Committee.

HEMISPHERIC [BILATERAL RELATIONS] DIVISION

Overview

The Hemispheric (Bilateral Relations) Division was constituted following the re-organization of the Ministry' structure in January 2009.

Mandate

The Division's mandate is to promote and further the development of The Bahamas' bilateral relations

with the countries of the hemisphere which comprise the United States of America, Canada and Latin America, focusing on the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. In this regard, the Division is to further formulate a policy framework on how to achieve that goal.

The Division also has, in tandem with the Protocol Division, responsibility for the overall coordination of visits by Heads of State or Government, or official representatives from these countries in the form of preparing the Briefing Document (Country Brief) for the respective Bahamas Government officials during the Courtesy Call phase of the visit. The Division also assists in the preparation of the Remarks by the Governor-General for the Presentation of Letter of Credence upon the appointment of an Ambassador from one of the countries of the hemisphere to The Bahamas.

In accomplishing its mandate, the Division seeks to do this by:

- Monitoring developments (political, economic, etc.) within the countries of the hemisphere;
- Prepare and maintain updated Country Briefs on the countries of the hemisphere;
- Provide analysis and policy papers on political, economic and other issues within the countries of the hemisphere and their impact on The Bahamas; and
- Monitor the work of the Organization of American State and the United Nations on matters of a bilateral political nature pertaining to hemispheric relations; and
- Liaise with The Bahamas' delegations to the Organization of American States and the United Nations on issues of a bilateral political nature between The Bahamas and the country of the hemisphere.

Bilateral Relations

The Bahamas maintains diplomatic relations with all the countries of the hemisphere, namely:

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Canada
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Nicaragua
- Venezuela
- Uruguay
- United States of America

LEGAL AFFAIRS DIVISION (LAD)

The Legal Affairs Division is responsible for the following:

- i. Coordination of negotiations of *bilateral and multilateral agreements* on issues specifically assigned to the Division, including Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLAT's), Extradition, United

- Nations (UN), Organisation of American States (OAS), International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Conventions;
- ii. Cataloguing and maintenance of the treaty register;
 - iii. Liaison with the Embassy of the United States (US Coast Guard) on illegal migrant flows, search and rescue operations and other issues, which involve requests for the US to conduct operations in Bahamian territorial waters and airspace;
 - iv. Liaison with the Ministry of National Security on security (Police/Defence Force) issues;
 - v. Signature, ratification and accession of treaties and agreements by The Bahamas, and co-ordination of implementation and reporting obligations under treaties and Agreements that The Bahamas is party to;
 - vi. Matters relating to applications for transfer of sentenced prisoners;
 - vii. Matters relating to Refugees and Asylum;
 - viii. Requests for Mutual Legal Assistance;
 - ix. Foreign aircraft/ship/research clearance;
 - x. Credentials for Bahamas Delegations;
 - xi. Monitoring and co-ordination of Bahamas representation on various regional and international legal bodies;
 - xii. Preparation/co-ordination of papers and briefs on regional and international legal issues (trafficking in persons, human rights);
 - xiii. Requests for assistance in Child Abduction cases pursuant to the Hague Convention on Child Abduction;
 - xiv. Processing of alleged violations of International Maritime Conventions by Bahamas registered vessels;
 - xv. Coordination of Bahamas Policy/international response on terrorism.
 - xvi. Attendance at meetings and preparation of reports, briefs and position papers on Law of the Sea matters;
 - xvii. Liaison with the National Anti-Drug Secretariat on the implementation of international conventions and treaties on drug control, crime prevention and criminal justice issues such as corruption, money laundering, small arms etc.
 - xviii. Coordination and advise on the international aspects of The Bahamas' strategy on maritime issues;
 - xix. Organisation of the bi-annual Bahamas/United States Joint Drug Task Force;
 - xx. Monitoring of Port and airport security issues; and
 - xxi. Coordination of Bahamas response to piracy.

THE MULTILATERAL RELATIONS/ORGANIZATIONS [ECONOMIC] DIVISION

The Multilateral Relations/Organizations [Economic] Division maintains close coordination and cooperation with substantive Government Ministries and Departments on a wide range of issues related to trade and economic development including:

- o Meetings of the CARICOM Councils for Trade and Economic Development [COTED] and Finance and Planning [COFAP]
- o The ongoing negotiations for a CARICOM – Canada Trade and Development Agreement
- o The Bahamas' accession to the World Trade Organization
- o Implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union
- o The United States Caribbean Basin Initiative
- o Negotiations for a successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Issues emanating from various specialized agencies of the United Nations, including the World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], the Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], the World Intellectual Property Organization [WIPO], United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], World Customs Organization [WCO] etc.

The Division also deals with trade and economic issues emanating from the various intergovernmental processes underway within organizations to which The Bahamas belongs, including the Organization of American States [OAS], the Association of Caribbean States [ACS], the United Nations [UN], the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific States [ACP], the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC] and the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System [SELA]. In addition, the Division monitors global economic developments that have an impact on The Bahamas and provides advice and guidance in this regard, and also liaises with relevant Government Ministries and Departments on trade and investment promotion matters.

MULTILATERAL RELATIONS/ORGANIZATIONS (POLITICAL) DIVISION

The Multilateral Relations/Organizations (Political) Division has primary responsibility for coordinating the issues pertaining to international political affairs in the Ministry. In this regard, the Division monitors, researches, analyses, reports and provides policy advice and input, as appropriate, on political developments worldwide, as well as on international organizations, particularly the United Nations System, the Organisation of American States (OAS), the Commonwealth, the European Union, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and Hemispheric Relations, for example the Summit of the Americas process, the Latin American Economic System (SELA). The Division, therefore, liaises, consults with and conveys information, advice and instructions to Bahamas Delegations to the General Assemblies of United Nations and the OAS, as well as to other regional and international Meetings. The Division also prepares and/or coordinates Briefs for such Meetings. Additionally, the Division coordinates and/or manages the lobbying efforts for the election of The Bahamas' Candidatures to Regional and International Organizations. In the case of international Candidatures of Foreign Governments, the Division administers the Ministry's international candidature grid and consults with substantive Agencies nationally, respecting the position of The Bahamas during the Elections on these Candidacies.

In carrying out its functions, the Division interacts with Ministries and Agencies, non-governmental Organisations and the private sector, as relevant, and with regional and international Organizations, on social development issues, health, labour, human rights, democracy and the rule of law, to ensure that The Bahamas' position in these areas is articulated in a manner which contributes to the understanding, fostering and achievement of national interests. The Division also coordinates with Rotary Clubs of The Bahamas, the Model United Nations simulation exercise for high schools both in The Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

- Management of Foreign Policy Issues
- Monitor Regional and Global issues affecting The Bahamas Government
- Monitor the activities of International Organizations
- Provide advice to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Government Ministers and Departments
- Coordinate the preparation of Reports mandated under International Treaties and Conventions
- Negotiation support to Government Ministers Foreign Policy Briefings
- Foreign Policy Advice to Overseas Missions

- Representation at International Conference / Meetings

PASSPORT OFFICE

The Passport Office (Central Passport Office, New Providence and Passport Office Freeport) is responsible for the processing and issuance of national identity documents – Passports, Certificates of Identity and Emergency Passports – in accordance with the Constitution, the Passport Act and related laws and regulations of The Bahamas.

The Central Passport Office, Nassau, co-ordinates and oversees the administration of passport services in seventeen (17) Family Island Districts and by The Bahamas Missions which issue passports abroad. It also participates in the work of the Passport Investigative Committee, which reviews passport applications of individuals who have changed their names by deed poll, and cases in which Bahamian citizenship is in question. The Chief Passport Officer advises the Permanent Secretary, and assists in the briefing of the Minister, on Passport issues.

PROTOCOL DIVISION

The Division is responsible for providing Protocol Services in respect of Government's business at Government House, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other Ministries/Departments of Government, and the accreditation of foreign and Bahamian diplomats and consular officers. The Division also provides advice and guidance on ceremonial protocol, is responsible for the administration and management of the VIP Lounge at Nassau International Airport, and is the Liaison with Foreign Missions and Offices of international organizations accredited to The Bahamas.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE DIVISION [TAD]

The Technical Assistance Division (TAD) administers the technical co-operation and assistance programmes offered bilaterally and multilaterally to The Bahamas, due to its membership in international and regional organizations and through its diplomatic relations with other states. Technical Assistance Cooperation is administered in the form of capacity building, training opportunities, professional exchanges, fellowships/scholarships and national development projects, provision of consultants, materials and equipment. The TAD co-operates with both the public and private sector and the general public in implementing its technical assistance work.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is normally the first point of contact for offers of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The TAD is responsible for carrying out the Ministry's coordination function in this area. Once received, the correspondence is then offered to the relevant ministries, i.e. College of The Bahamas, Chamber of Commerce, Bahamas Agricultural and Industrial Corporation and other NGO's. TAD also negotiates technical cooperation agreements between international and regional organization and other states.

The TAD manages the nomination/application process, as required and ensures that the stipulated deadline is met. It communicates the results of these processes to the concerned party, and if necessary, assists with the finalization of organizational and administrative arrangements. All Government officials nominated to represent The Bahamas in any technical cooperation assistance activity require Cabinet approval.

The TAD also administers on behalf of international and regional organizations and other states, scholarship programmes, by coordinating the nomination interview and pre-selection processes. The division also organizes annual scholarship award ceremony for scholarship recipients from the *Organization of American States* and the People's Republic of China. Historically, the Head of the TAD Division is usually the National Liaison Officer for the Organization of American States and therefore all nomination for scholarships and requests for project funding must be channelled through this division

for transmission to the OAS local office. The Head of TAD is also the Primary Contact for the *Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC)* and its sub-divisions, as well as the *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*

TAD also prepares brief input on technical cooperation issues, bilaterally and multilaterally, in preparation for diplomatic courtesy calls, meetings and conferences.

Special Focus

- i. To establish priority areas of focus for technical co-operation/assistance efforts;
- ii. To Identify training opportunities for Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- iii. Coordination of National Development Projects.

TECHNICAL TRAINING/HONORARY CONSUL UNIT

The Honorary Consuls Unit (HCU) provides input for Government decisions in respect of Honorary Consuls, and is responsible for relations with The Bahamas' Honorary Consular Corps. In co-operation with the Protocol Division, the HCU arranges for the issuance of Letters of Commission for Honorary Consuls, and for their appearance in Nassau to receive their commissions; provides Honorary Consuls with supplies and material including stationery, promotional materials, speeches by Bahamas Government officials and other current information; receives and analyses the annual reports of Honorary Consuls; and reviews and advises on new applications to represent The Bahamas as Honorary Consuls.

Unit/Activities

The HCU keeps Honorary Consuls apprised of developments in The Bahamas, and instructs them on activities they are requested to carry out on behalf of Government in the cities/countries in which they are appointed. The HCU also advised Honorary Consuls of travel to their areas of high-level Bahamas Government officials, so that appropriate courtesies can be extended. the HCU cooperates with Honorary Consuls in protecting the interest of The Bahamas and Bahamians abroad. The HCU's consideration of the reports of Honorary Consuls assists in determining the courses of action The Bahamas might take in their areas.