



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bastian Champions Capacity-Building and SIDs Priorities at UNGA81

NEW YORK, New York – As part of the Bahamian delegation to the 81st United Nations General Assembly, led by Prime Minister the Hon. Philip Davis, Minister of Innovation and National Development, the Hon. Sebastian J. D. Bastian participated in two high-level discussions in New York on Monday. The Minister brought The Bahamas' small-state perspective to conversations on artificial intelligence, disaster resilience and the investment needed to turn rapidly advancing technology into real development gains.

Bastian was the sole Member State representative on the **United Nations Digital Cooperation Day panel: Technology at the Frontlines of Disaster Resilience**. He joined leaders and experts from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, Google DeepMind, and GSMA, amongst others.

Drawing on The Bahamas' lived experience as a hurricane-vulnerable archipelago, Bastian argued for a practical approach to AI and emerging technology: one measured by whether it helps countries protect people, make better decisions and recover faster when disaster strikes.

Bastian called for advances in areas such as forecasting, satellite imagery, risk mapping and early warning to become tools that small states can access, gain capacity to deploy, and sustain over time, including across islands and communities where connectivity and resources may be limited.

"The question for us is not whether the technology exists. It is whether small states can access it, build the local capacity to apply it to our own realities, and rely on it when our people need it most," Bastian said. "Small island developing states must be included from the beginning in the design of global AI and resilience initiatives, rather than being brought in after solutions have already been developed."

He also advocated for stronger regional cooperation, allowing Caribbean countries to pool technical expertise and resources while keeping critical decisions and accountability at the national level.

Minister Bastian also represented The Bahamas at the **IDB Group Presidential Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence**, a closed-door discussion bringing together leaders from Latin America and the Caribbean and the technology sector around the relationship between AI, digitisation and productivity.



Bastian used the discussion to press for a broader approach to development financing in the digital age, arguing that investment in technology adoption must be matched by investment in the people who will use, adapt and ultimately build with that technology.

He called for greater development funding to be directed toward skills and capacity building, particularly for small and developing states, so that their citizens are equipped to participate in the digital economy as creators and innovators, rather than primarily as consumers of technologies developed elsewhere.

“We have spent significant resources helping countries adopt technology. We now have to be equally ambitious about building the people who can shape what comes next,” Bastian said. “For countries like The Bahamas, success cannot simply mean using the technology. It has to mean developing Bahamians with the skills to adapt it, build with it and create solutions of their own.”

The two engagements set the tone for the week, with Bastian stating that he intends to use The Bahamas’ presence at UNGA to move beyond conversation and toward practical partnerships, expertise and investment that can support work already underway at home.

“We are building on the work we began at the first UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance earlier this year. Since then The Bahamas has strengthened relationships and opened important doors. This week is about turning that momentum into tangible opportunities, whether that is technical expertise, investment, knowledge transfer or partnerships that build greater capability at home,” Bastian said. “We want to accelerate the work already underway in digital government, AI, cybersecurity and future skills, while developing Bahamians with the capacity to lead and build in these areas.”

The Minister has also pledged to use the week to advocate for the realities and interests of small island developing states to be foregrounded as global approaches to AI and digital governance take shape.

The Minister’s programme forms part of the wider Bahamas delegation led by Prime Minister Davis, whose UNGA81 agenda spans bilateral diplomacy, climate action, small-state advocacy, technology and artificial intelligence, national security, investment, and development.

Prime Minister Davis will deliver The Bahamas’ national statement to the General Assembly on Friday, with the delegation continuing its programme of bilateral, multilateral and high-level engagements throughout the week.

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About the Ministry of Innovation and National Development

The Ministry of Innovation and National Development (MIND) leads the Government of The Bahamas' agenda for digital government modernization, national development planning, ICT infrastructure, and artificial intelligence governance, driving innovation across every sector of Bahamian life.

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Captions:

Photo 1:

Moderator (far right)

- **Prof. Monica Sanders** — Founder and Advocate in Chief, Bonne Terre Labs.

Panelists (l-r)

- **Hon. Sebastian Bastian**, Minister of Innovation and National Development
- **Vivek Badrinath** — Director General, GSMA.
- **Dr. Sujit Kumar Mohanty** — Chief, Intergovernmental Processes, Interagency Cooperation and Partnerships Branch, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).
- **Joelle Barral** — Senior Director of Research and Engineering, Google Deepmind.

Not Pictured:

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan — Chairperson, M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF).

Photo 2:

Hon. Sebastian Bastian and **Quinton Lightbourne**, Executive Director for The Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago and Guyana at the IDB Group join the **IDB Group Presidential Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence**