



Opening and Welcome Remarks Sixth Annual Bahamas Research Conference on Financial Crime

by Governor John A. Rolle

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Margaritaville Beach Resort, Nassau, Bahamas

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen, and welcome to the Sixth Annual Bahamas Research Conference on Financial Crime.

I would like to begin by thanking Professor Jason Sharman for leading the organisation on this event, which has resulted in another impressive list of papers received. I am also grateful for my colleagues from the Central Bank of The Bahamas for their time and efforts in planning and executing this conference.

I extend a warm Bahamian welcome to all our scholars and guests, particularly those who have travelled to be here in person and those of you who have joined us virtually.

I also take this opportunity to recognize some of our distinguished guests, including representatives from the Attorney General’s Office of The Bahamas; Mr. Jeremy Weil, Vice President, the Financial Action Task Force (“FATF”); Ms. Dawne Spicer, Executive Director of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (“CFATF”); Mr. Esteban Fullin, the Executive Secretary of El Grupo de Acción Financiera de Latinoamérica/ Financial Task Force of Latin America (“GAFILAT”); and representatives from Inter-American Development Bank (“IDB”). On this note, we appreciate the IDB for continuing to co-sponsor this conference, providing translation services and its ongoing support in helping us to maintain a vibrant research network for key segments of the conference.

In 2024, the Central Bank of The Bahamas celebrated its 50th or Golden Anniversary, providing a year-long occasion to reflect on the important role that our institution has played, respectively, in maintaining the macro-economic stability of our country and the evolution and performance of the financial services sector. Specific to regulatory and supervisory practices, the Central Bank has continuously evolved its frameworks and approaches to stay aligned with best international practices and standards. Of course, it remains a collaborative whole of industry approach, with

the government taking the critical lead to ensure that our legal framework is adaptive and current and the Bahamas Group of Financial Services Regulators, working together to ensure harmonization in our approaches to supervision and regulation.

The AML and financial crimes space is particularly illustrative of this. Over these past 50 years, The Bahamas has materially strengthened its approach to AML risk management and its cooperation on an international level in these matters. That level of commitment has also extended to collaboration in matters of international tax transparency.

However, this continues to be a very costly process, in terms of maintaining a balance between the effectiveness of our risk management practices and the unintended effects of regulations, as implemented, on financial inclusion, the ease of doing business, and the effects intended or unintended on the viability of otherwise legitimate business models.

This research conference continues to be motivated by such concerns. In particular, first, understanding objectively how the global system, given its risk-based approach, can achieve measured levels of effectiveness, in ways that are less costly when scaled to economies and financial centres of varying sizes. Second, ensuring that measures of bias in the application of international standards are objectively quantifiable. In these regards, it is hoped that our scholarly research will encourage policy discussions that lead to improvements in how we formulate and implement international standards and that these efforts will encourage the release of more data that help expand the range of enquiry into such topics.

The sixth iteration of this conference is also occurring at an important juncture, as The Bahamas prepares for the next round of assessment under the FATF's mutual evaluations process. Last year, led by the Attorney General's Office, the Central Bank and other Bahamian regulators and law enforcement agencies updated the Bahamas' National Risk Assessment on money laundering and financial crimes. It underscored a renewed engagement with the financial services industry, that is on the frontline of The Bahamas' contribution to the global fight against money laundering, terrorist financing, and proliferation financing. This risk assessment document sets the stage for more introspection, additional reforms where necessary, and national awareness building, ahead of our next peer evaluation.

This conference complements our efforts by strengthening our international outreach on anti-money laundering and financial crimes and it helps to build local capacity.

The Central Bank is already planning for the 2026 conference, which we expect will build upon the momentum gained this year. That said, it is my hope that over these next two days, you will have had an opportunity to network and build valuable connections with compliance professionals, regulators, and industry experts from around the globe.

Thank you and enjoy the conference!