The government established the new Ministry of Disaster Preparedness, Management and Reconstruction and appointed Central Grand Bahama Member of Parliament Lewis as minister of state to lead the ministry.

The formation of the new ministry was announced by Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis during a press conference yesterday at the Office of the Prime Minister.

“I am pleased to announce that East Grand Bahama, Abaco, and the Abaco Cays will be designated as special economic recovery zones for an initial period of three years,” Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis said yesterday during a press conference at the Office of the Prime Minister.

“This designation, modeled after what is already in place for the Over-the-Hill initiative, will enable the community to begin the process of rebuilding,” Minnis said.

PM to Sign Carnival HOA

Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis is expected to travel to Grand Bahama on Wednesday and during this trip, Dr. Minnis said he will sign a heads of agreement (HOA) with Carnival Corporation for a new cruise port on the island.

“It is more vital now than ever to continue with our economic development program for Grand Bahama,” Dr. Minnis said yesterday during a press conference at the Office of the Prime Minister.

1.5 Billion Pounds of Debris Removal Begins

It’s a mammoth task, but according to Minister of the Environment and Housing Romuald Ferrera, the process of removing the estimated 1.5 billion pounds of debris left behind by Hurricane Dorian has begun.

“Notwithstanding the tens of millions of dollars, there are volunteer agencies here on the ground. There are private citizens on the ground that have begun the debris removal, certainly from their homes and their premises,” Ferrera said last Friday.

“Another facet of debris removal would be the work of the FFF (Ferry Fleet Foundation) and the non-governmental organizations like the Salvation Army, the Bahama National Trust, and other organizations.”

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China donates $500,000

The Chinese government donated on Friday $500,000 to The Bahamas for Hurricane Dorian relief efforts.

Speaker of the House of Assembly Halson Moultrie was meeting with the Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China Dr. Cai Daifeng at the Senate on Monday.

According to Moultrie, Dr. Daifeng extended a courtesy call to open the parliament doors to increase communication between China and The Bahamas and seek opportunities to enhance the two countries' bilateral relationship and diplomatic relationship.

"China is deepening its democracy and The Bahamas is in the process of deepening our democracy. We both believe in the rule of law and so the purpose really is to seek beneficial opportunities to advance the people of The Bahamas while also the people of China will be benefiting from the mutually beneficial relationship," Moultrie said.

“We see opportunities of the remainder of the archipelago to develop as we restore and develop Grand Bahama and Great Abaco so that it could be a greater population distribution.”

The speaker gave a list of key areas for development which include scientific research and development of marine industries as well as education and industrial development in the southeast Bahamas infrastructural development projects.

"China is making a maximum security facility in Little Iguana as it is strategically positioned at the gateway to The Bahamas from the South," he said.

"We have to have more problems coming from the South, so we respect to illegal immigration and with respect to poaching of our Bahamian waters and so we believe if we put the proper faculties at that gateway, we can better protect ourselves and our sovereignty.”

Dr. Daifeng said China takes the relationship with The Bahamas very seriously as it is beneficial and the Bahamian government can expect their cooperation in areas such as culture, tourism and port development.

He added that the two economies are highly complimentary. He even invited The Bahamas to join China’s Belt and Road Initiative – China’s global development strategy for international trade and economic growth.

“By targeting the Bahamian government in this period of crisis, Beijing would be making the same opportunistic play to access critical foreign infrastructure," Rubio argued.

"In recent years, China has sought to expand its presence and influence in The Bahamas. With many airports no longer operational and ports rendered unsuitable, the post-Dorian situation is tailor-made for Chinese exploitation. Beijing’s predatory mercantilist international strategy, the Belt and Road Initiative, is predicated on offering other nations assistance with infrastructure projects.

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“The level of destruction that Dorian caused is unprecedented, and Americans, as regional partners and global leaders, have both moral and national security imperatives to lend our logistical resources to help the Bahamas and defend our own hemisphere from China’s encroachment.”
The Bahamas has joined the global strike advocating for more to be done by the government to end climate change.

The recent fires in the Amazon, scorching summer temperatures across Europe and closer to home, deadly hurricanes with a record breaking six additional named storms active in the Atlantic and Pacific, all signs that more must be done to address climate change.

Leading a global strike is a 16-year-old Swedish girl Greta Thunberg, who has the full support of The Bahamas.

Citing the climate crisis declaration last Friday, where young representatives of the Cat Island Conservative Institute, who called for immediate, bold action be taken by The Bahamas, other small island developing states and the international community to address this crisis.

Minister of the Environment and Housing Romauld Ferreira agreed. “The success of this is not really going to be measured in how many homes are destroyed. It’s actually the opposite,” he said.

“It’s going be measured in how many homes are not destroyed, how many homes are not ruined, how many lives are not lost.”

Founder and Executive Director of the Young Marine Explorers and the Cat Island Conservative Institute Nikita Shiel-Rolle issued a call to action for everyone to join the cause.

“It is through harnessing the collective powers that we will be able to combat climate change and rebuild our island nation capable of surviving the changes in our climate and ensuring that the people of The Bahamas and every small island developing state thrives, as this is our inherent human right,” she said.

In addition, to the 2020 plastic ban, Minister Ferreira said the government will soon bring environmental legislation to parliament to make The Bahamas more environmentally friendly by year’s end.

“On one of the two fundamental things that we want to do in addition to the plastics ban legislation is to amend the Bahamas National Trust Act, amend the Bahamas Protective areas fund. We want to introduce an act to establish the Ministry of Environment which is very important and we also want to introduce an act to establish the Department of Planning and Protection which is also very important.

“Those are things that will put into bear and take us down the road of better environmental stewardship and give us the ability to levy the kinds of fines that should be proportionate with the sort of event that we generate and cause the fine to occur.”

Further, what’s next in addressing this crisis is for the prime minister to make a declaration on an international level. Additionally, he said he would suggest the speaker of the House of Assembly declare that The Bahamas is in a climate crisis once parliament resumes.
Mes. Romauld Ferreira, minister of the Environment and Housing, said, “The PLP is deeply concerned about this lack of leadership and the lack of a clear direction and vision through a practical policy response by the government in the aftermath of the country’s latest disaster and crisis,” Davids said yesterday in a statement responding to the prime minister’s announcement of the new ministry.

“NEMA is the statutory authority and executing mechanism to manage the process,” Davids said in a statement responding to the prime minister’s announcement of the new ministry. “We do not agree that another ministry must be structurally and functionally transformed from a coordination body to a fully resourced corporate sole entity.”

It has been almost three weeks since Dorian made landfall, and the government does not appear any more prepared to deal with this national emergency than it was in the days leading up to and after Dorian’s landfall,” Davids added.

“There was insufficient for a recall of parliament to debate much of the details and to chart a cohesive course going forward. “No doubt, the disaster is the substantive minister, which is the Most Hon. Hubert MInnis himself.”

Davids has many questions concerning the role of the new Ministry of Disaster Preparedness, Management, and Reconstruction.

“Is one of the leaders of the legislative branch of government a new subject to the executive? “The recently announced storm coordinators report to the nema executive director? Does NEMA report to this new ministry? What is the state minister for Grand Bahama doing as a relief and restoration should be the major focus of that ministry?” Davids asked.

“The Prime minister will review the progress of Grand Bahama’s recovery efforts following Hurricane Dorian. “Dr. Minnis also announced that a shelter and housing plan has been developed to relocate the evacuees living in shelters in New Providence so that they will be able to return to Abaco and Grand Bahama. “Temporary housing options will be available for staff and many residents,” he added. “Dr. Minnis also pointed out that he met with the leadership of the Abaco Chamber of Commerce last week. “I have talked to many residents and friends of Abaco since Hurricane Dorian. The people of Abaco are ready to rebuild. Abacians are a resilient and strong people. Marsh Harbour, the Abaco Cays and Central and North Abaco will be built stronger and more resilient. “The Hope Town lighthouse must also be restored as an enduring symbol of the resilience of the people of Abaco, the people of Grand Bahama and all the people of our Commonwealth.”

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“As during Hurricane Matthew, there were laydown sites in New Providence and there were no attempts made to really sort and sometimes that creates a bigger problem in the end, so we ought to maximize our success,” Ferreira said.

The minister has revealed that it’s an enormous job. “The public ministry does not have the number of staff or international partners stand ready to assist. 1.5 Billion Pounds of Debris Removal Begins have to be the insurance adjusters, particularly for those homes and businesses that were insured. They would go through that process and the larger scale debris would take a little bit longer. The Ministry of Public Works is expected to travel to Abaco on Monday to start removing larger debris on that island. A team is already there identifying laydown sites and to assist in sorting. “During Hurricane Matthew, there were laydown sites in New Providence and there were no attempts made to really sort and sometimes that creates a bigger problem in the end, so we ought to maximize our success,” Ferreira said.

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