

**STATEMENT  
BY  
ZHIVARGO LAING  
APPOINTED CHIEF NEGOTIATOR  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE PRESS CONFERENCE ON  
THE APPOINTMENT OF THE CHIEF NEGOTIATOR AND  
UPCOMING WTO TRADE NEGOTIATIONS  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2018**

I thank the Government of The Bahamas for reposing this trust in me to lead the WTO trade negotiation team on the country's behalf. This appointment comes at a unique time, as I now lead the Government and Public Policy Institute, at University of The Bahamas (UB). The presence today of University of The Bahamas President Dr. Rodney D. Smith and Provost Dr. Linda A. Davis signals the University's support of my appointment as Chief Negotiator. The University will bring to bear its substantial resources to ensure that these kinds of undertakings are grounded in informed expertise. In fact, we at the University invite the Government to consider other areas in which UB faculty and researchers can add value and build capacity within the country by serving as consultants where necessary.

Expressions of thanks are extended to Mr. Ray Winder, whom I succeeded in this post. I was there when Ray was first appointed and led the delegation when the application for accession was made. Ray has been a faithful and professional Chief Negotiator, and has provided excellent service in this post.

As Chief Negotiator, my mandate is to lead the effort to ensure that the strategic intent of The Bahamas' attempt to join the WTO is effectively fulfilled. This means that any decision to accept membership in the WTO must enhance the nation's economic and development prospects, produce only manageable solutions to

challenges for the country, and allow for a reasonable period of time to adopt and adapt to any obligations arising from that membership. If this cannot be achieved, then membership, to my mind, cannot be achieved.

As I proceed in this position, I commit to the following:

1. A dogged focus on the promotion, protection and progression of The Bahamas' interest first;
2. My most professional and expert service to the Government and people of The Bahamas;
3. An absolute commitment to openness and collaboration with the private business sector;
4. A thorough effort to keep the Bahamian public informed of this process every step of the way; and
5. Only advising of the adoption of membership provided that net gains to our country are secured.

Once again, I thank the Government and look forward to working with this capable negotiating team on this important strategic endeavor.