



For Immediate Release

Open Letter to Political Candidates: Strengthening Partnership with Civil Society Beyond Elections

Nassau, Bahamas – May 8th, 2026 –

With the General Election days away, much attention is being placed on campaign promises, economic plans, and national priorities. Yet, one critical partner in achieving sustainable development outcomes continues to be underutilized in formal policy processes: civil society.

Non-profits across The Bahamas are on the frontlines of addressing some of our most pressing challenges, from poverty and food security to environmental protection, youth development, and community resilience. These organizations are not only service providers. They are also knowledge holders, trusted community actors, and key contributors to national development.

At the Organization for Responsible Governance (ORG), initiatives like Map4Good Bahamas are helping to strengthen the visibility, connection, and coordination of this sector. It unveils both the scale of civil society's contributions, and the opportunity to better integrate these efforts into national development planning. The sector itself is active, invested, and ready to engage more meaningfully. The question is, are political candidates ready to engage them, especially beyond election season?

This time brings many promises, a new level of participation in communities, and bursts of social support. But politicians cannot expect buy-in for these performances if the effort is not sustained beyond the next two weeks. It is also hard to have faith in these efforts when previous commitments have yet to be fully realized.

Through the 2025 signing of the Escazú Agreement, The Bahamas has signaled a commitment to more inclusive and transparent governance. This was reinforced most recently by our hosting of COP4 of the Escazú Agreement in New Providence in April. The Escazú Agreement is grounded in principles of access to information, public participation, and access to justice in environmental matters. Now is the time for *all* political candidates to follow through on this commitment, ensuring that these principles are not only upheld in environmental decision-making, but embedded across governance more broadly. Which means actively enabling public participation, strengthening transparency, and creating space for civil society to contribute meaningfully to decisions that shape our collective future.

We challenge political candidates to move beyond viewing civil society as stakeholders needing to be consulted merely occasionally, and instead commit to structured, ongoing partnership; better yet, to co-creation. Because it's the individuals and organizations that are on the ground every day, working in our communities and face-to-face with our nation's most vulnerable, who truly understand the reality of our most serious national issues, how deeply they run, and the resources and capacity needed to address them.

This ongoing partnership should include things like:

- Institutionalizing formal consultation mechanisms that effectively engage civil society in policy development.
- Creating an enabling environment that supports the work of non-profits through things like clear regulatory frameworks, access to funding opportunities, and incentives for charitable giving.
- Investing in capacity-building to strengthen governance, accountability, and long-term impact of the sector.
- Supporting coordination efforts that reduce duplication and strengthen collaboration across organizations and islands.

This call extends beyond those who will form the next government. Candidates who do not win office still hold influence as community leaders, advocates, and future decision-makers. We encourage all candidates to remain engaged with the work underway across the non-profit sector - learning about it, supporting it, and championing it in whatever roles they go on to hold, formal and informal.

In small island contexts like ours, where resources are limited and vulnerabilities are high, we cannot afford fragmented approaches to national development. Stronger collaboration between government and civil society is essential. Political leadership must reflect a commitment to inclusive governance, where communities and civil society are actively engaged in shaping the decisions that affect their lives.

We encourage candidates to clearly articulate how they will partner with civil society, whether or not they are elected. And perhaps more importantly, how they will ensure those partnerships are meaningful and sustained.

The future of The Bahamas depends not only on strong leadership, but on strong collaboration.

Sincerely,

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About the Organization for Responsible Governance

The Organization for Responsible Governance (ORG) is an independent, non-partisan nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting good governance, transparency, and active citizenship in The Bahamas through research, civic education, and community engagement initiatives.