



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ORG Concerned about Impact of Environmental Amendments on Environment, Transparency, and Public Trust

Nassau, The Bahamas — June 17th, 2026 —

The Organization for Responsible Governance (ORG) is concerned by proposed amendments to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations, which could make public consultation optional during the environmental review process.

ORG has published a detailed policy statement to support public review of the proposed amendments. It benchmarks the new proposals against current regulations and international standards, offering recommendations to strengthen the legislation and improve stakeholder engagement.

The policy statement recognizes and supports a number of positive reforms contained within the amendments to the regulations, including stronger environmental screening criteria, increased attention to environmentally sensitive areas, and the introduction of operational environmental management plans; however, we believe additional safeguards can ensure transparency and public trust remain central to environmental decision-making.

Among ORG's primary concerns is a proposed change to Regulation 7 of the EIA Act of 2020 that would allow public consultation to be determined on a case by case basis, rather than maintaining it as a standard part of the environmental review process. We're also concerned about the proposed removal of mandatory public notice requirements when Environmental Impact Assessments and Environmental Management Plans are submitted for review.

The proposed amendments come after The Bahamas signed The Escazú Agreement in June 2025. This is the region's first legally binding treaty focused on access to environmental information, access to justice in environmental matters, and most notably in this context, public participation in environmental decision-making. Even more recently, The Bahamas hosted the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP4) to the Escazú Agreement, which brought together regional governments, civil society organizations, and international partners to advance environmental rights across Latin America and the Caribbean.

COP4 emphasized the importance of transparency, accountability, and meaningful citizen engagement in environmental governance. Against this backdrop, the proposed amendments represent not just a step, but leaps away from the principles we recently championed as a country before international stakeholders.

Public consultation is a fundamental pillar of good governance, transparency, and accountability. It provides communities with an opportunity to understand proposed developments, voice



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concerns, contribute local knowledge, and participate meaningfully in decisions that directly affect their environment, livelihoods, and quality of life.

"There's a lot in these proposed amendments that moves environmental management in the right direction," said ORG Executive Director Matthew Aubry. "But there is a concern about changes that could make public consultation optional rather than expected. The people who will live with the impacts of a development should have a meaningful early stage opportunity to understand what's being proposed, ask questions, and share their perspectives.

"Good consultation isn't about slowing projects down," Aubry added. "In fact, it often helps projects succeed in the long run. When people are engaged early, concerns can be addressed before positions harden, misinformation is reduced, and decisions are generally stronger because they're informed by both technical expertise and local knowledge. At the end of the day, this is really about trust. People don't have to agree on every project, but they should have confidence that decisions are being made transparently, consistently, and with opportunities for meaningful public input."

During a time when public trust in institutions is on a global downward spiral and mechanisms that support transparency are needed more than ever, amendments such as these completely oppose good governance, effective and fair democratic processes, and sustainable national development.

If The Bahamas wishes to continue to position itself as a regional leader in environmental governance, our policymakers must uphold the principles of openness, accountability, and fair and inclusive public participation - all of which are central to both democratic governance and the country's commitments under the Escazú Agreement.

ORG urges the government to carefully consider the impacts of these amendments and to ensure that communities remain an integral part of environmental decision-making processes. Passage of regulations that fully support environmental transparency and protection gives The Bahamas the opportunity to live up to international best practices.

It is vital that regulations that relate to public consultation should include the input of stakeholders that will be most affected. As such, ORG encourages interested stakeholders to review the proposals and participate in any consultation process that may be undertaken. Our full policy statement and recommendations regarding the proposed amendments can be found on our website at orgbahamas.com/policyreviewcenter.

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About the Organization for Responsible Governance



Organization *for* Responsible Governance

The Organization for Responsible Governance (ORG) is an independent, non-partisan nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening good governance and citizen engagement in The Bahamas.

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