



NATIONAL QUALITY POLICY FOR THE BAHAMAS



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1. Introduction

1.1 **“Quality”** may be defined as the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics of a product or service fulfils requirements. It follows, then, that for quality, and in particular good or acceptable quality, to exist in a society, it is necessary to have a mechanism for laying down appropriate requirements and to create other mechanisms for assessing whether those requirements have been fulfilled. In national and international trade, in legislation to protect the consumer, the environment or the national economy from undesirable products or services, or from their effects, and in many other areas, each country typically puts in place a **“National Quality Infrastructure”** to address these issues.

The National Quality Infrastructure, or NQI, typically contains mechanisms for the setting of standards, for measurement, for the determination of conformity to standards by techniques such as inspection and testing, for declaring such conformity, and for means of assuring the competence of those who practice these techniques. Where necessary, regulatory authorities become involved, as the free market system does not always guarantee that acceptable levels of quality will prevail. In the business sector, agreements on the quality of products and services form the basis for trade. The quality of imports is measured to guarantee good quality, and the quality of exports has to be determined to ensure access to foreign markets. Throughout society, unfair exploitation of the consumer has to be stamped out. Ultimately, the success of the NQI will ensure that “good quality drives out bad quality” for the benefit of all.

For the NQI to work, however, it requires the commitment of not only Government, but of all sectors of society. Guidance and direction in the ongoing development of the NQI for The Bahamas, and a roadmap for achieving success, is therefore needed, and is provided in this National Quality Policy, which will be revised from time to time.

1.2 The Bahamas has historically traded largely within its region, and especially with the United States, for reasons of geography, transport logistics and convenience. The economy is largely service-based, with significant inputs from tourism and banking, and the heavy reliance on imports of goods from the United States has to a great extent prevented the local economy from needing to gear up to manufacture and export goods. Those goods that have been exported have been largely primary products (agricultural produce, etc.) and have been consigned mainly to the United States.

This economic model is potentially under threat for a number of reasons. Firstly, the main service industries, tourism and banking, have become notoriously volatile worldwide, and reliance on them continuing to thrive into the future can no longer be assumed. Secondly, the inexorable trend toward globalization of trade means that goods and services exported from The Bahamas need more than ever before to meet market entry requirements such as conformity to international standards, and the provision of the necessary evidence of such conformity these days requires the establishment of an internationally accepted infrastructure of accreditation, certification and testing. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly in the long run, a relatively small and fragile economy can only grow through a combination of diversification, innovation, commitment to quality, the opening up of new export markets, enhanced competitiveness ... and a certain amount of good fortune.

The realities of the globalized marketplace also pose threats to the health and safety of Bahamas' consumers. In the past, reliance on imports from the United States has brought with it, in most cases, the benefits of buying from a market that is itself well controlled. The opening up of beneficial trading possibilities worldwide now brings with it the added responsibility to ensure that goods entering The Bahamas' market, from whatever source, do not pose unacceptable threats to the health and safety of Bahamas' consumers. The need to protect the rights of the consumers and establish a strong and effective regulatory mechanism using accredited laboratories, certification bodies and inspection agencies to control the use of sub-standard products and services in the market has therefore become essential.

In light of these realities, the Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas has embarked on a mission, hand in hand with the greater Caribbean region and with the wellbeing of the population and the sustainability of the economy in mind, to strengthen and upgrade the National Quality Infrastructure for the good of all stakeholders. The time is therefore right to establish a National Quality Policy that will result in the improvement in the quality of The Bahamas' products and services, enhancing their competitiveness and access to markets, and in greater protection for the consumer, leading ultimately to an improvement in the quality and lifestyle of all The Bahamas' citizens.

2. Vision and Objectives of the National Quality Policy

2.1 Vision

In line with Central Government policies and plans such as the National Development Plan, etc., the Vision is that the National Quality Infrastructure should be developed in such a way that it promotes and supports the sustainable growth and diversification of The Bahamas' economy, leading to greater economic prosperity and improved quality of life. Key indicators of this will include the availability of better quality products and services across all sectors.

Examples of the specific improvements that are required include

- The development of, and support for, a "Quality Culture" and a "Shared Vision of Quality" at all levels of society;
- The updating and systematic review of the legislative framework surrounding quality;
- The clear demonstration of a Political Commitment to Quality in The Bahamas;
- The necessary buy-in and resource mobilization and investment in quality by both public and private sector entities;
- The growth of intra-regional cooperation in quality infrastructure matters, leading to enhanced trade opportunities;
- Facilitation of growth in national productivity and in the exporting sector;
- Enhanced food security – importantly, both for food consumed locally as well as for exports;
- Reduction in the volume of unnecessary imports of basic food and other products, and the substitution of good quality local products for them, thereby resulting in greater job creation;

- The creation of an environment that encourages and rewards innovation, especially in the identification and development of other products that can gain access to export markets;
- The further development, standardization and broadening of the Tourism offering and its supply chain, concentrating on the assurance of quality, whilst at the same time encouraging further diversification in the broader economy;
- The expansion and development of a prioritized, pragmatic and cost-effective measurement, testing and inspection regime that meets the major needs of the economy;
- The prioritized and targeted intervention in specific markets under Legal Metrology legislation to protect consumers from unfair weights and measures used in trade and from deceptive practices;
- The gradual and controlled development of a Technical Regulatory Framework that brings The Bahamas' market in line with best international and regional practices and actively discourages deceptive practices, dumping and the proliferation of unsafe products and services; and
- Improved quality of health care facilities, services and delivery.

All of these improvements should be targeted in a sustainable and affordable way, especially with regard to the protection of the environment and the optimal use of scarce resources, both physical and human.

The implementation of the National Quality Policy should, moreover, be verifiable. A key indicator of attainment of the “desired future state” embodied in the Vision is that once the National Quality Policy is being fully implemented, there should be clarity within the country and especially between agencies over the roles and responsibilities of all agencies carrying out functions under the NQP. A suitable document, website or other means of spelling out these roles and responsibilities should be made available.

2.2 Objectives

The **primary objectives** of the National Quality Policy are to

- **ensure that goods and services produced or traded in The Bahamas, or exported from The Bahamas find ready acceptance in national, regional and international markets.** This means that they have to be designed, manufactured and supplied in a manner that fully matches or exceeds the needs, expectations and requirements of the retailers, purchasers and consumers and that they meet appropriate standards. It also means that these goods and services have to meet the requirements of the regulatory authorities in The Bahamas (in the case of local products consumed locally, or of imports) and of the relevant regulatory authorities in other countries to which The Bahamas wishes to export them;
- **ensure that Bahamas' consumers are protected** from unsafe or dangerous products and services, from deceptive practices and from any other undesirable consequence of the purchase or use of products and services that occur as a result of market failures, unfair trade, dumping of substandard products in the local market or any other cause; and
- **protect the environment, human, animal and plant life in The Bahamas, and the quality of Bahamas' exports,** from deleterious effects caused by such unsafe products or services or other causes.

Continuous improvement of the National Quality Infrastructure in meeting these objectives and in cooperation and alignment with related initiatives in the CARICOM region and with the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) is essential for the sustainable development of The Bahamas' economy and for the ongoing social development and wellbeing of its citizens.

Secondary objectives, and the means to achieve these primary objectives, include:

- designing and establishing a metrology, standardization, accreditation, inspection, testing and certification infrastructure that fully meets the needs of the country;
- supporting the use and application of international and regional standards throughout;
- establishing and improving a framework for technical regulation in The Bahamas to safeguard the people, fauna, flora and the environment – including promulgating the necessary legislation that meets international requirements such as the WTO-TBT and SPS Agreements and international best practices;
- establishing effective cooperation amongst the quality related institutions and the national regulatory authorities, both in The Bahamas and with their regional and international trading partners;
- providing a framework to support and give direction to the development of the human resources necessary to support the various metrology, standardization, accreditation, conformity assessment and technical regulation activities and programmes;
- raising the level of quality consciousness amongst both suppliers and consumers across the territory of The Bahamas, by the introduction and maintenance of a quality culture in public life and throughout society; and finally
- in support of all these objectives, establishing and maintaining effective communication and outreach programmes to carry the population of The Bahamas along with the National Quality Infrastructure Organizations on this journey.

3. Current situation of The Bahamas' Quality Infrastructure

3.1 Background: The Bahamas has arrived relatively late among its neighbours to the establishment of its quality infrastructure functions, and this can be partially explained by its proximity to the USA, from where it has historically imported the vast majority of its products and services, and to which it has exported its relatively low level of physical exports. The Bahamas' economy relies extremely heavily on services such as tourism and banking / financial services, and thus is prone to significant shocks as and when there is a global or local downturn in these sectors.

As a new standards body, one of the first key tasks for BBSQ has been the promotion within The Bahamas of the notion of quality and of the benefits of standards and of a functioning national quality infrastructure. In the medium to longer term The Bahamas needs to create a more competitive economy that can export more, reduce reliance on imports of basic products, and thereby create more employment. The signing of an Economic Partnership Agreement between the CARIFORUM countries and

the European Union has opened up global markets, but has also highlighted a number of trading realities, that will affect the Bahamas' economy into the future:

- Exports of products and services from the Bahamas will only succeed if they are of the right quality, as demanded by the customer;
- This implies that they will need to conform to relevant internationally-harmonized standards;
- The onus is therefore on The Bahamas to adopt and embrace such standards, but to go further and put in place conformity assessment mechanisms to provide assurance to trading partners that the relevant products do indeed meet rigorous international requirements – this is especially important with food products, where “farm to fork” traceability and an infrastructure that will permit the accredited testing and export certification (for example SPS certification) will be essential;
- Assistance will be needed from Government and various other sources to assist local producers to meet the necessary requirements; and
- In terms of imports, there have probably always been insufficient import inspection and control mechanisms in the Bahamas, but the country has been buffered to a certain extent by tending to import from one country that largely maintains high standards – however, deceptive practices and the importation of defective or unsafe products still need to be stamped out, and the future expansion of the Bahamas' economy into a globalized market will bring with it many new challenges and increased threats of dumping of poor quality goods.

3.2 The NQI:

- a) All of the elements of the NQI in The Bahamas are in their infancy:
 - The standards body, BBSQ, is new and therefore has not had time to develop many national standards;
 - Consequently, International and Regional standards have thus far not been adopted by The Bahamas to any great extent;
 - Metrology, including Legal Metrology, is operating, but still at a low level;
 - Testing and certification functions and facilities are insufficient, partly owing to a lack of quality consciousness;
 - Accreditation in the Bahamas is consequently at a low level, although there are some regional moves toward cooperation from which The Bahamas can benefit;
 - The necessary supporting and empowering legislation has been lacking, although strong moves are now being made to improve the situation; and
 - The Technical Regulations environment is rudimentary at best. Technical regulations and control mechanisms are lacking, and the level and frequency of inspection of imports and within the local market is insufficient. Despite this, there are some overlaps of responsibilities in the regime that is operating, and these need to be rationalized.
- b) In all fields under the NQI, capacity building and other support will be needed for the foreseeable future.
- c) Internationally, The Bahamas is working toward WTO accession, but this will take some time.

- d) Within the regional context, while The Bahamas is not a member of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), regional cooperation does exist through CROSQ in all the pillars of quality infrastructure. However, the CARICOM single market is not working as well as it might – in practice owing to sovereignty issues. In the CARICOM region, there is not the same level of integration of Directives and laws as in the EU – in theory there is provision within CARICOM for the free movement of services, people and capital but in practice there are a lot of trade barrier issues that are not resolved, and only about half of the agreed regional standards are in fact harmonized between the countries of the region.
- e) There is a draft Regional Quality Policy under CROSQ, and this National Quality Policy will need to align with and supplement it in key areas. There needs to be an enabling environment created in each Caribbean country for both the regional and the respective national quality policies, in which the public and private sectors, and civil society, all work towards the same goal of a quality conscious environment.
- f) In support of both the national and regional quality infrastructures, decision makers therefore need to adopt the habit of demanding quality products and services, and supporting, using and promoting the work of the national quality institutions.

4. Governance and structural issues

The Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality (BBSQ) was officially launched as the national standards body for the Bahamas in 2016. It was established under the Standards Act of 2006 and the Weights and Measures Act of 2006 as a parastatal, in other words a corporate body that at the time of preparing this Policy reports to, and receives a subvention from, the Ministry of Financial Services. BBSQ is governed by a Standards Council, and will provide services to The Bahamas in the areas of

- **Standardization** – facilitating, through Technical Committees of stakeholders, the development of national standards and the adoption of international standards, and promoting the benefits of standards, including the provision of relevant information in its function as the nominated WTO-TBT Enquiry Point and representing The Bahamas in international standards fora;
- **Metrology** – providing legal metrology services, in addition to various fundamental measurement, verification, inspection and calibration services and the investigation of related consumer complaints;
- **Conformity Assessment** – the intention being to provide product testing and certification services, the issuance of quality marks, and conducting relevant market surveillance in terms of voluntary and especially mandatory standards or other technical regulations as and when requested by Government;

- **Accreditation** – by acting as the National Focal Point for Accreditation in The Bahamas, as a member of the Caribbean Cooperation for Accreditation (CCA) Scheme, and focusing initially on supporting and increasing laboratory accreditation in The Bahamas; and
- **Information and Communication** - The provision of consultancy, promotion and training services related to its core functions.

BBSQ will therefore be the key focal point for quality in the Bahamas for the foreseeable future, and it will seek partnerships with both public and private sector bodies in order to carry out its mandate. It will seek to establish partnerships with relevant government agencies and regulatory bodies. It will also play its part in regional cooperation structures and will represent The Bahamas' interests in the international arena.

In parallel with the operations of BBSQ, and where necessary with its assistance, the Government will continue to legislate and maintain control mechanisms as necessary through the various Ministries, each of which is entitled to govern and regulate in its area of responsibility. Where inspection or control mechanisms are weak, the Government will strengthen them, allocating and reallocating responsibilities as necessary to ensure a competent and effective approach.

In the medium to longer term, the Government will engage with all players in the quality and trading environment in The Bahamas to establish an effective common Technical Regulation Framework that provides all necessary protections for the consumer, the environment and the national economy, that identifies and removes all instances of duplication of regulatory responsibility and that fully meets The Bahamas' obligations under WTO Agreements.

As the National Quality Infrastructure develops, Government will ensure adherence to international best practices, subject always to practical considerations and resource availability and optimization. Government will continue to support and oversee those parts of the NQI that are for the good of the nation and rightly fall within the public sphere, but will encourage the creation of a level playing field, in terms of which fair competition between commercial service providers in the private sector is enabled. Where practicable and effective, regional cooperative solutions will be supported in order to assist in greater regional integration.

This National Quality Policy will be reviewed and updated from time to time.

5. The roles and interests of stakeholders in The Bahamas' quality scene

As time goes on, the degree of interest and influence of various stakeholder groups can vary within the National Quality Infrastructure. It is therefore appropriate to consider in the National Quality Policy the roles played by the private sector, SMEs, regional and international bodies, consumers, organized labour, and even the donor community, together with Government's and BBSQ's plans to address them and to keep all dialogues open.

The Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas should therefore:

- (a) promote public-public and public-private partnership approaches in implementing the National Quality Policy, as well as establish an effective coordination and collaboration mechanism with the private sector, development agencies, NGOs, consumer organizations and civil society, including organized labour;
- (b) support and incentivize the private sector to comply with national standards and adopt quality management systems in their operations in order to competitively produce and trade in quality products and services;
- (c) encourage and incentivize the Improvement in the quality of The Bahamas' products and services, hasten the introduction of international practices in the field of quality and so contribute to the competitiveness of the Bahamas' products and services;
- (d) encourage the private sector and civil society, including academia, to participate actively in representative structures and technical committees dealing with standardization, accreditation and conformity assessment; and be prepared to
- (e) mobilize resources from public funds, international development partners and the private sector for the implementation of the National Quality Policy.

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) representative bodies and associations of industry, trade and commerce, and the media should be engaged in order to participate fully in developing, using, promoting and supporting the national quality infrastructure;

In particular, NGOs are encouraged to take the following initiatives in coordination with relevant partners:

- (a) Promote and participate in quality education and training activities;
- (b) Participate in the dissemination of quality-related information;
- (c) Implement activities that promote the improvement of quality and the environment; and
- (d) Promote the representation of relevant bodies in the technical committees in the fields of standardization, metrology, accreditation and conformity assessment.

The media are actively encouraged to become involved in the dissemination of information related to standardization and quality and the improvement of productivity, thereby contributing to the multiplication effect and the effect on the country.

International development and donor agencies are requested to assist with development and capacity building programmes related to the NQI and technical regulation regime.

They should consider:

- (a) Supporting the implementation of the Quality Policy;
- (b) Coordinating support of other partners for the execution of priority programs;
- (c) Supporting the transfer of quality-related technology to the country;
- (d) Supporting the transfer of knowledge and information which allows for the development of an adequate quality and technology infrastructure;
- (e) Supporting the country's participation in relevant regional and international organizations; and
- (f) Providing training for national specialists and technicians who will be part of the implementation of the National Quality Policy.

In addition, CROSQ should continue to develop all its regional quality infrastructure frameworks and implement its development programmes in such a way as to contribute to the capacity of BBSQ on the national, regional and international fronts.

In support of this, The Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality (BBSQ) should, over time consider developing an integrated Stakeholder Engagement Plan and a targeted SME Support Programme, focusing on key sectors of the economy. In exercising its mandate, BBSQ should liaise closely with entities such as The Consumer Protection Commission and The Price Control Commission to ensure uniformity and effectiveness of approach.

6. Financial, legal and other responsibilities of stakeholders

The Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas will be responsible for financing the development, upgrading and restructuring of The Bahamas' NQI institutions (in particular BBSQ) that fall within the public sector.

The financing of private sector institutions and organizations will remain the responsibility of the private sector, as will be their involvement in standards technical committees and similar structures at the national, regional and international level.

In particular, the Government will be responsible for financing the following:

- a) The development and publication of national standards as well as the establishment and maintenance of the standards information centre;
- b) The establishment and maintenance of national measurement standards in metrology;
- c) The establishment and maintenance of a national calibration service until it has developed to the point where its users will be able to fund it;

- d) The legal metrology services insofar as they cannot be funded through fees and levies paid by the users of measuring equipment falling within the scope of legal metrology legislation;
- e) Membership and affiliation fees to appropriate international and regional bodies such as, but not limited to The International Organization for Standardization (ISO), The International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), The Bureau International des Poids et Mesures (BIPM), the Organisation Internationale de Métrologie Légale (OIML), the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), the International Accreditation Forum (IAF), and CROSQ, as they become necessary and when warranted by the state of development of The Bahamas' NQI in their respective technical areas;
- f) The establishment and maintenance of testing and calibration capacity in support of the National Quality Policy, with the proviso that these services may be required to be commercialized as soon as possible after their establishment and their viability has been proven, in order not to compete with service providers in the private sector on an unequal basis;
- g) Strategically important testing capacity that can never be successfully commercialized until such time as it is no longer a strategic necessity; and
- h) The establishment of proper market surveillance operations in areas required by Government, to ensure that technical regulations are complied with in order to safeguard public health and safety.

The funding for the testing and certification of products falling within the scope of technical regulations remains the responsibility of the suppliers.

In order not to distort the market, and to provide for a steady self-earned income of the NQI institutions in the public domain, the private industry and public institutions that make use of the conformity assessment services of the NQI, have the responsibility to pay for such services. The pricing levels shall be set by BBSQ or another NQI institution or Ministry, as relevant, to cover costs, but always taking into consideration the capacity of especially the (M)SME sector to pay for such services.

Government will see to it that the necessary legal empowerments, rearrangements of responsibilities or Statutory Instruments that are needed to give effect to the NQP are developed and/or promulgated.

Government will further sponsor appropriate logistical arrangements such as plans for the necessary resources, including accommodation, equipment and trained staff, needed for the planned journey towards the envisaged future of the NQI.

BBSQ will seek to develop and implement an evolving financial sustainability model that will be maintained consistent with its level of maturity.

7. Roadmap for Implementation of the National Quality Policy

7.1 General

The National Quality Policy will be implemented across four traditional technical areas:

- Metrology
- Standards
- Conformity Assessment; and
- Accreditation

In addition, a fifth implementation area is necessary, and that concerns the communication and transfer of information between the Government, the Quality Institutions and their stakeholders, including those in the industrial, agricultural and commercial sectors and consumers at large. This is essential for the creation of a supply "push" and a demand "pull" effect and to allow for the smooth transition between the current status of the quality infrastructure and the targeted improvements.

Finally, this National Quality Policy would be incomplete if it failed to acknowledge the importance of establishing in The Bahamas a WTO-compliant framework for the operation of a Technical Regulations regime that interfaces with the other parts of the quality infrastructure and uses the force of law to make its underlying goals come to fruition.

7.2 Metrology

- **The Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas will** provide the resources and facilitation necessary to strengthen and enable the Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality to offer nationally recognized metrology services.
Note: It is understood that such services would in practice require to be offered on a cost recovery or cost plus basis so as to optimize the Government's support in the taxpayers' interest.
- **National Metrology institute:** The Metrology Department of the Bahamas Bureau of Standards & Quality (BBSQ) will act as the National Metrology Institute for the Bahamas, and will represent the country in regional and international metrology organizations. It will ensure traceability to the International System of Units (SI), or as otherwise prescribed in the Law on Metrology. It will have the following operational responsibilities:
 - the maintenance of the national measurement standards;
 - the support of a national calibration service throughout the country, encompassing a number of independent calibration laboratories; and
 - managing the legal metrology system of The Bahamas.
- **National Measurement Standards (Scientific Metrology):** The Bahamas Bureau of Standards & Quality is responsible for increasing the awareness of metrology and for establishing a common metrological framework; the Bahamas Bureau of Standards & Quality will further upgrade the national measurement standards in line with the prioritized needs of the country.

In addition, when necessary or expedient, BBSQ will expand the metrology system by using the regional CARIMET cooperation framework of CROSQ and by entering into a formal partnership with other national

institutes that are technically competent through accreditation in specialized metrology fields of measurements, and endeavour to provide an accurate measurement service across all required and relevant disciplines within The Bahamas.

In line with BIPM good practices, the Bahamas Bureau of Standards & Quality has the overall responsibility for ensuring that it and all accredited laboratories maintain quality management systems that conform to the relevant CIPM MRA requirements.

- **National Calibration Service (Industrial Metrology):** The Bahamas Bureau of Standards & Quality will, mindful of the demonstrated needs of trade and industry sectors and of national authorities, and within their capabilities, link up with the international metrology system. This linkage will be demonstrated through entries of their Calibration and Measurement Capabilities (CMCs) in the recognition system (i.e. Key Comparison Data Base – KCDB) administered by the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures (BIPM). This will in the first place be done through an MoU established in the region through the InterAmerican System of Metrology (SIM).

The Bahamas Bureau of Standards & Quality will actively support the development of a nation-wide calibration service to use the national measurement standards in industry, in relevant authorities and in society in order to ensure that all measurements emanating from The Bahamas are acceptable in trade and law enforcement. Such support may include technical backing, training and advice to obtain accreditation.

Calibration services may be provided by The Bahamas Bureau of Standards & Quality and other public or private calibration laboratories, provided that their calibration equipment is traceably calibrated to the national measurement standards kept by the Bahamas Bureau of Standards & Quality. In addition, all calibration laboratories should be appropriately accredited against the relevant international standards.

- **Legal Metrology:** In order to ensure the equitable utilization of measurements not only in trade, but also in law enforcement, health services and environmental management, the Bahamas Bureau of Standards & Quality will upgrade the Weights and Measures function to a fully-fledged Legal Metrology activity operating under a new Metrology Act.

Legal Metrology will ensure that measuring equipment used in trade, law enforcement, and health services and in protection of the environment are appropriately type-approved, verified on placement into service and thereafter regularly verified to ensure an equitable situation regarding the traders and consumers, and the correctness of measurements used in law enforcement, health services and environmental protection. Legal Metrology will establish national requirements for pre-packed goods and will ensure that suppliers comply with these.

Legal Metrology is responsible for ensuring as far as possible that all national Legal Metrology requirements are based on international standards such as the Recommendations of the Organisation International de Métrologie Légale (OIML).

7.3 Standards

- **The Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas will** provide the resources and facilitation necessary to strengthen and enable the Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality to offer nationally recognized standards development and related information services.

- **The Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality (BBSQ) will:**
 - a) establish and maintain a standards development process that is a voluntary activity based on achieving the consensus of stakeholders, implemented in a participatory and transparent manner;
 - b) be the sole agency in The Bahamas responsible for publishing Bahamas' National Standards and for the adoption of regional standards as produced by CROSQ, in whose work BBSQ actively participates;
 - c) develop Bahamas' National Standards for products, services and systems according to the guidelines laid down in the WTO-TBT Agreement and according to the relevant best practices given in the latest version of the ISO/IEC Directives;
 - d) establish and maintain relevant national technical committees comprising a balanced representation of stakeholders, for this purpose;
 - e) ensure that national standards are based to the greatest extent possible on relevant international standards or on regionally harmonized texts (CROSQ Standards), are in line with national needs, and that any national deviations adopted are the result of demonstrable and scientific proof that they are required for the standard to be effective in the Bahamas;
 - f) ensure that all national standards are periodically and systematically reviewed for their continuous conformity with technological developments, market trends, national and international requirements;
 - g) negotiate with key stakeholders and publish a national "Standard for Standards" in which the national standards development process is outlined, and is made freely available to interested parties;
 - h) subject to resource availability, participate actively through "Mirror Committees" in the development of international standards where this is of strategic relevance for The Bahamas, and participate in relevant regional and international standardization and related fora on behalf of The Bahamas;
 - i) promote the benefits of standardization to stakeholders and consumers in The Bahamas;
 - j) maintain a national Standards Information centre; and

- k) operate the WTO-TBT National Enquiry Point on behalf of The Bahamas.

7.4 Conformity Assessment

Note: Conformity assessment services include Inspection, Testing and Certification

- **The Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas will** initially provide the resources and facilitation necessary to strengthen and enable the Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality to offer nationally recognized certification, testing and inspection services. The responsible Ministry will create a policy environment that will not hinder, but facilitate the establishment and advancement of private conformity assessment service providers. The responsible Ministry will ensure that conformity assessment services provided are in response to national needs and the relevant programmes are based on international standards, and that BBSQ is empowered to charge for its services when appropriate.
- **The Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality will:**
 - (a) promote the implementation of international quality system standards and utilize the national conformity assessment system to provide necessary testing, inspection and certification services;
 - (b) undertake a review of testing needs in The Bahamas and in cooperation with Government, design establish and operate testing facilities that are appropriate and cost effective for local needs;
 - (c) establish or facilitate the establishment of product certification services with the aim of developing a certification mark programme, and encourage organizations to improve the competitiveness of their products through applying for a quality mark;
 - (d) establish or facilitate the establishment of inspection services that are non-discriminatory, transparent and competent in the inspection of locally sourced and imported produce and products; and
 - (e) continue its contributory work in the Caribbean Network of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CANCAB) as managed by CROSQ.

7.5 Accreditation

- **The Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas will** provide the necessary resources and facilitation required to maintain and strengthen the Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality to ensure the provision and access to regionally and internationally recognized accreditation services, in its capacity as the National Accreditation Focal Point.
- **The Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality will:**
 - (a) become a facilitator for recognized accreditation services to conformity assessment service providers such as testing laboratories including medical laboratories, calibration laboratories,

inspection bodies and certification bodies, in the public and private sectors, in accordance with the Caribbean Cooperation in Accreditation (CCA) Scheme which is a scheme of mutual cooperation amongst regional National Accreditation Bodies (NABs), National Accreditation Focal Points (NAFPs) and CROSQ.

(b) become established as an NAFP that increases the level of knowledge of accreditation in The Bahamas by promoting the requirements of accreditation and by being a national resource centre for accreditation information.

c) be a facilitator for training of potential accreditation assessors and technical experts, so as to assist in establishing and maintaining a regional pool of recognized accreditation experts in support of regionally agreed accreditation plans and in line with the ultimate establishment of a regional accreditation body.

- **Local laboratories are encouraged to:** access information on accreditation requirements and implement these requirements for improved delivery of services, increase their competitiveness and sustainability and expand their range of services to local and regional customers.

7.6 Information and Communication

The Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas will, in concert with the Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality (BBSQ):

- a) Raise the level of awareness in central government and in its agencies of the benefits of standards in all government policies, regulatory systems and public procurement;
- b) Raise the level of awareness in the business sector and among the population on the benefits of using standards at the different levels of business such as purchasing, manufacture and supply;
- c) Integrate standards awareness into educational curricula at all levels;
- d) Develop and implement plans for provision of continuous training on standards implementation and promotion of quality culture;
- e) Develop and implement a Communications Strategy for awareness creation on the National Quality Policy;
- f) Seek to establish Memoranda of Understanding or liaison mechanisms with partner agencies, wherever feasible, to optimise inter-agency cooperation;

- g) Disseminate widely information relating to all approved national standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment requirements; and
- h) Promote linkages with like international umbrella institutions such as ISO, IEC, OIML, ILAC, IAF, COPANT, etc.

In support of these efforts, BBSQ will continue its work with the CROSQ Regional Committee on Marketing, Information, Knowledge Management and Education.

Furthermore, the channels of communication used in all the above areas shall be appropriate for the target audience (use of social media, etc.).

7.7 Technical Regulatory Framework

- **The Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas will:**
 - Establish a common Technical Regulatory Framework and support it with appropriate legislation;
 - Establish an office that will have the responsibility to coordinate the division of responsibilities amongst the various regulatory authorities, the division of labour and responsibilities between the regulatory authorities and the NQI institutions, and which would ensure that all Ministries follow the Technical Regulation Framework;
 - Review the current technical regulation regime to ensure that it complies fully with the WTO TBT Agreement, other relevant trade agreements and protocols; and
 - Establish common principles to be followed by all the Ministries and their Agencies in developing and implementing technical regulations.
- **Ministries will be responsible, subject to the technical regulation framework,** for developing, implementing and maintaining technical regulations within their sphere of responsibility
- **Notwithstanding the above, in pursuance of an effective Technical Regulatory Framework, Government reserves the right to:**
 - Identify and require the use of inspection and testing bodies that have the capacity to play a part in the implementation of technical regulations;
 - Encourage the principle of “one regulation per product category or sector” as appropriate and wherever feasible, in order to remove unnecessary duplication;
 - Maintain at an appropriate level, such that it encourages compliance, a system of sanctions for non-compliance with technical regulations, and where necessary
 - Put in place a “firewall” between BBSQ’s operations and those of regulatory bodies in order to avoid conflicts of interest.