International Insights: Bahamas Consul General Outlines Investment Opportunities, Tourism Recovery at Consular Conversations

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Atlanta event highlights economic ties, education partnerships, and hurricane resilience

Anthony D.E. Moss, Consul General of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, painted a picture of a nation on the rebound during Global Atlanta's Consular Conversations series on December 10, outlining opportunities in renewable energy, agriculture and tourism while addressing challenges like brain drain and climate resilience.

The event aligned with Miller & Martin's longstanding International/World Law Group practice, which for more than 30 years has helped connect foreign companies investing in the Southeast with American businesses expanding globally.

Speaking to an audience including Tom Harrold and Mike Marshall at Miller & Martin PLLC's offices in Midtown Atlanta, Moss — a former Deputy Speaker of the Bahamian House of Assembly who represented the Exuma and Ragged Island constituency for 15 years — said his country of roughly 400,000 people is actively seeking foreign investment and collaboration across multiple sectors.

Tourism Bouncing Back

Tourism, one of the Bahamas' primary economic engines alongside financial services, has recovered from the double blow of Hurricane Dorian in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic, Moss said. While cruise ship arrivals have increased significantly, the country is particularly focused on attracting "stopover visitors" who stay in hotels or Airbnbs rather than just disembarking from cruise ships for day trips.

"Those stopover visitors, they tend to leave more into your economy than the cruise industry," Moss explained.

Delta Air Lines has resumed seasonal service to several Bahamian islands from Atlanta, including flights to Great Exuma that restarted last month, making it easier for travelers in the Southeast to access islands beyond the typical tourist destinations of Nassau and Grand Bahama.

Moss encouraged potential investors and tourists to look beyond the main islands. "You haven't seen the Bahamas until you go to places like Eleuthera and Cat Island," he said, noting that islands like Long Island offer significant opportunities for property development and vacation rentals.

Renewable Energy and Agriculture Draw Interest

With sunshine roughly 330 days a year, the Bahamas is well-positioned for solar energy development, and Moss said the government is in discussions about expanding solar infrastructure across the islands. He predicted that within five to 10 years, solar energy will be tied into the national power grid in a much more substantial way.

Individual solar installations are already underway on some islands, and Moss invited companies with solar technology or coastal erosion solutions to visit the consulate to discuss potential collaborations with Bahamian government officials.

Agriculture represents another area where the Bahamas is looking to reduce its dependence on imported goods. The government established Bamboo Town on the island of Andros, the country's largest island, as an agricultural hub for growing vegetables and raising livestock. While progress has been slower than hoped, Moss said the initiative continues as the country works to become more self-sufficient in food production.

Education Partnerships and Brain Drain Concerns

Since arriving in Atlanta in March 2022, Moss has made education outreach a priority. His office covers 10 states from the Carolinas west to Oklahoma and Kansas, with an estimated 5,500 Bahamians living across the region. An officer in his consulate specifically focuses on education partnerships, and staff have visited universities in Georgia, Tennessee, Arkansas and the Carolinas to develop opportunities for Bahamian students.

Moss's own youngest son is studying at Georgia State University's Alpharetta campus, taking advantage of the educational opportunities his father's posting has provided.

However, like many small island nations, the Bahamas faces a brain drain challenge when students study abroad and don't return home. When asked about this issue, Moss acknowledged it's a problem the government is working to address.

"Recently, we've had a discussion with the Prime Minister where we're going to see how we can do our best to invite some of those who are studying abroad to return to the Bahamas, where we can expand on what we have," he said. The University of the Bahamas is serving as a key partner in developing strategies to retain talent and create opportunities for returning graduates.

Sports Tourism and Hurricane Resilience

A former softball player and longtime sports administrator who chaired the Exuma Basketball Association, Moss highlighted sports tourism as a growing opportunity. The Bahamas now hosts numerous basketball tournaments and is opening its doors to teams from U.S. colleges and other countries.

The nation has also learned hard lessons about hurricane preparedness over the decades. Moss said the Bahamas maintains strict building codes as a result of repeated hurricanes, and the country's National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) has been formalized to assist both domestic and Caribbean neighbors during disasters. The Bahamas offered assistance to Jamaica following Hurricane Beryl's recent devastation.

Still, climate change poses an existential threat. With the country's highest point, found on Cat Island and standing at just around 200 feet above sea level, Moss acknowledged that rising seas could claim some islands in the not-so-distant future.

Open Door Policy

Throughout the discussion, moderated by Global Atlanta Managing Editor Trevor Williams, Moss repeatedly invited audience members to visit the consulate's offices. Unlike many diplomatic missions that operate strictly by appointment, Moss said his office maintains an open-door, walk-in policy.

"I don't operate on an appointment basis at my office," he said. "I operate on a walk-in basis. You're always welcome."

For a diplomat who spent 15 years in electoral politics before transitioning to this role, the accessibility seems fitting. Moss won all five of his elections, including two terms in local government before moving to national politics, and said he retired from politics in 2017 to make room for younger leaders.

His posting in Atlanta, he joked, has created some "tension" at home. While he longs to return to the Bahamas, his wife has fallen in love with Atlanta and would prefer to stay.

"I long to go back to the Bahamas every so often," Moss said with a laugh. "I always tell my friend, my aide and driver, that I am somebody who follows the philosophy of happy wife, happy life."

The next Consular Conversations event will feature the United Kingdom in January, followed by Greece in February at Emory University's Carlos Museum.

Global Atlanta's Consular Conversations series is presented and sponsored by Miller & Martin PLLC. The series provides a platform for foreign diplomats to discuss their countries' economic priorities and bilateral relationships with the United States.

