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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR STOLEN WEBSITE FOREIGN AFFAIRS
INFORMATION AND DOMAIN NAME

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Some one in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the Minister on down must account for the shocking failure on their part to protect the intellectual property of the Bahamas Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (mfabahamas.org) is no longer under the care, custody and control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The site is now reportedly controlled by Lincoln Bain, the talk show host and C. Allen Johnson, an expert in IT services. This is a clear dereliction of duty on the part of the Minister and his staff. Heads ought to roll.

What is even more remarkable is that instead of the Government acting with honesty, contrition and seeking absolution in this matter, its main spokesman on the issue the Minister of State for Finance Zhivargo Laing acted with arrogance and sophistry to argue that somehow it was the fault of Fred Mitchell that the FNM government lost the information belonging to the government. This is the typical "blame the PLPism" that we have come to expect from Mr. Laing and his colleagues.

In a face off with Mr. Laing on Mr. Bain's radio show today with me, the Minister repeatedly sought to argue that the Ministry's site was not a Bahamas government site. This is sophistry of the best kind. The fact is the site was owned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and paid for with their credit card out of the Washington embassy. Up to last week, it had information from the present Minister of Foreign Affairs' statements and policy pronouncements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This website is a key to information for those seeking to visit our country and for those Bahamians who live abroad. It has information on visas for The Bahamas and for countries that are to be visited by Bahamians, a history of the Ministry's speeches and information about consulates and diplomats at home and abroad and a list of all treaties to which the government adheres. All of that is now according to the press appropriated to someone else and lost. The Minister, the Government should be ashamed and embarrassed. It shows a shocking and systemic lack of

appreciation for the security of the intellectual property of the government of The Bahamas.

For three years, I have been seeking to get the Minister Brent Symonette and his Ministry to do something about the website. It was only at the times that I raised the matter in the House of Assembly that they would rush to do something about it, then lapse into doing nothing again. The last time I spoke on this matter in my budget address I pointed out that the biography of myself was still there as an introduction for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Even that did not spur them into action. Even the Cabinet's direction to the Minister did not spur him to action.

The last excuse advanced by the Minister was that the officer who knew the codes had retired. The fact is that he was forced out of the Ministry and the government because he was disliked by the establishment and they have been seeking within the past days to get his assistance without being able to offer any compensation to him for his work. But in any event, as we now know the solution was quite simple.

I pointed out to the Minister Laing and the public on the radio show today, the facts which he refuses to accept and so he sticks stubbornly to his party's tired worn out "blame the PLPism" philosophy. The government's IT platform was inadequate then and it is now to handle the government's IT needs and demands. The e-mails to and from the Bahamas.gov.bs site move like snail mail. The IT section of the government cannot handle the design demands for IT and so the Ministry's have to resort to private means if they are to live in the 21st century. No amount of posturing and "blame the PLPism" will help them get out of this mess. The Minister's answer to this complaint was in my view silly: that I had a slow computer.

The government must put the resources behind getting this mess straight and they must get the government's property back from Messrs. Bain and Johnson if indeed they have it as is reported. The Deputy Prime Minister must account to parliament for this loss of government information forthwith.

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