



## **PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Correction to article titled “BTC Chairman in televised debate challenge to union leaders”**

The Utilities Regulation & Competition Authority (URCA), the electronic communications regulator of The Bahamas, is responding with corrections to an article that appeared in The Tribune on 28 December with the headline “BTC Chairman in televised debate challenge to union leaders”. Numerous inaccurate statements about URCA and, in particular, its CEO, Mr. Usman Saadat, were made and attributed to Mr. Bernard Evans, President of the Bahamas Communications and Public Officers Union (BCPOU), in the article. It is incumbent upon URCA that accurate information is always disseminated.

The article makes reference to Mr. Saadat as the “newly appointed Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority Chairman (URCA)”. Mr. Wayne Aranha, who was appointed with effect from 1 August 2009, is the Chairman of URCA. Mr. Usman Saadat was appointed the Director of Policy and Regulation (DPR) of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), the predecessor to URCA, with effect from 20 April 2009 and, upon commencement of URCA on 1 August 2009, continued in that position. On 1 October 2010, Mr. Saadat was appointed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of URCA after the retirement of Mr. Michael J. Symonette.

Further, the article notes that Mr. Bernard Evans, BCPOU President, said that “He (Mr. Saadat) left Cable & Wireless in July last year... came here to join URCA in August of last year. We smell a fish there.” Mr. Saadat left Cable & Wireless in July 2008, and took up an appointment with the PUC in April 2009. It has been more than two years since Mr. Saadat left the employment of Cable & Wireless, and severed any ties with that company.

The appointment of Mr. Saadat as URCA’s former DPR, and now CEO, is far from sinister and should not give rise to any reasonable person concluding that some untoward scheme was underway or otherwise provides a basis for one to “smell a fish there”. Moreover, the union insinuates – wrongly in URCA’s view - that persons with industry experience should not work for the regulator. Many regulators, internationally and regionally, as well as regulators in The Bahamas, employ such experienced professionals with relevant industry background. URCA and the PUC have both had a long history of leadership with industry experience, including those with many years of work experience with BTC, WSC and BEC, without their past employment with the industry ever being a concern or questioned by the unions. The unions have recently been making factually incorrect and misleading statements about URCA’s role, and now its management; neither adds any positive contribution to the BTC privatization debate.

Mr. Wayne Aranha, URCA’s Chairman states “I am very disappointed that the union would make such reckless comments concerning URCA’s CEO. In accordance with the URCA Act, the Board (excluding Mr. Saadat, at the time DPR and an executive member of the Board) appointed Mr. Saadat after a

competitive and rigorous selection process. The Board is very pleased with Mr. Saadat's performance firstly as DPR and now as CEO. The Board is satisfied that no conflict of interest exists, and will ensure that none arises, between Mr. Saadat's duties as CEO (and an executive Board member) of URCA and any past association that he had with Cable & Wireless. If and when the sale of controlling interests in BTC to Cable & Wireless (or any other party) is referred to URCA for consideration, Mr. Saadat's past affiliation with Cable & Wireless will not have any influence on URCA's decisions".

URCA is committed to acting in a transparent manner in executing its functions under the Communications Act, 2009. All interested parties are invited to visit the URCA website at [www.urbahamas.bs](http://www.urbahamas.bs) to view public consultation documents, decisions and updates.

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