PROGRAMME FOR STRENGTHENING CROSS-BORDER ELECTRONIC TRANSACTIONS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN WORKSHOP SANTIAGO DE CHILE

Country: The Bahamas

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DIGITIZATION BACKGROUND

- The Commonwealth of The Bahamas now stands on the precipice of a digital revolution, with our Government's initiative to modernize and transform its services.

- On Monday, the 8th of April, 2019, The Bahamas Government signed an agreement with the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB); namely "Government Digital Transformation to Strengthen Competitiveness".

GOAL

- The general goal of this project is to foster the competitiveness of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas by reducing the costs of conducting business with the Government.

- The specific objectives are:

    (i) streamlining government procedures and making them available online to reduce the cost of government bureaucracy;

    (ii) increasing the use of ICT in the public sector; and

    (iii) Increasing transparency of government activities and strengthening auditing and control mechanisms.[1]

[1]IADB Government Digital Transformation To Strengthen Competitiveness Loan Proposal Report

CASE FOR INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

- Justification for ICT is made by the IADB in its Loan Proposal document stating that:

"Promoting the use of ICT in the public sector will both decrease the cost of interacting with the government for citizens and businesses, as well as increase the transparency in the functioning of government. The project will have an impact on how the country ranks in competitiveness related to other countries."[2]

[2]IADB Government Digital Transformation To Strengthen Competitiveness Loan Proposal Report

ICTs IN THE BAHAMAS

- Our Government recognizes the vital role ICTs play as the driving mechanism of transformation within the Public Service, and the further development of The Bahamas, and therefore, has made it a national priority in the country.

- Evidence of this commitment is realized through the establishment of a Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister, whose mandate is to transform the Public Service and place Government services on-line.

DIGITAL SIGNATURE & ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE IN THE BAHAMAS

- The Bahamas realizes the essential need for Digital Signature and Electronic Signature as key components in advancing the country digitally, notably, in its Government services.

- Under the current agreement with IADB, there are several components identified, each of which has their associated target objectives.
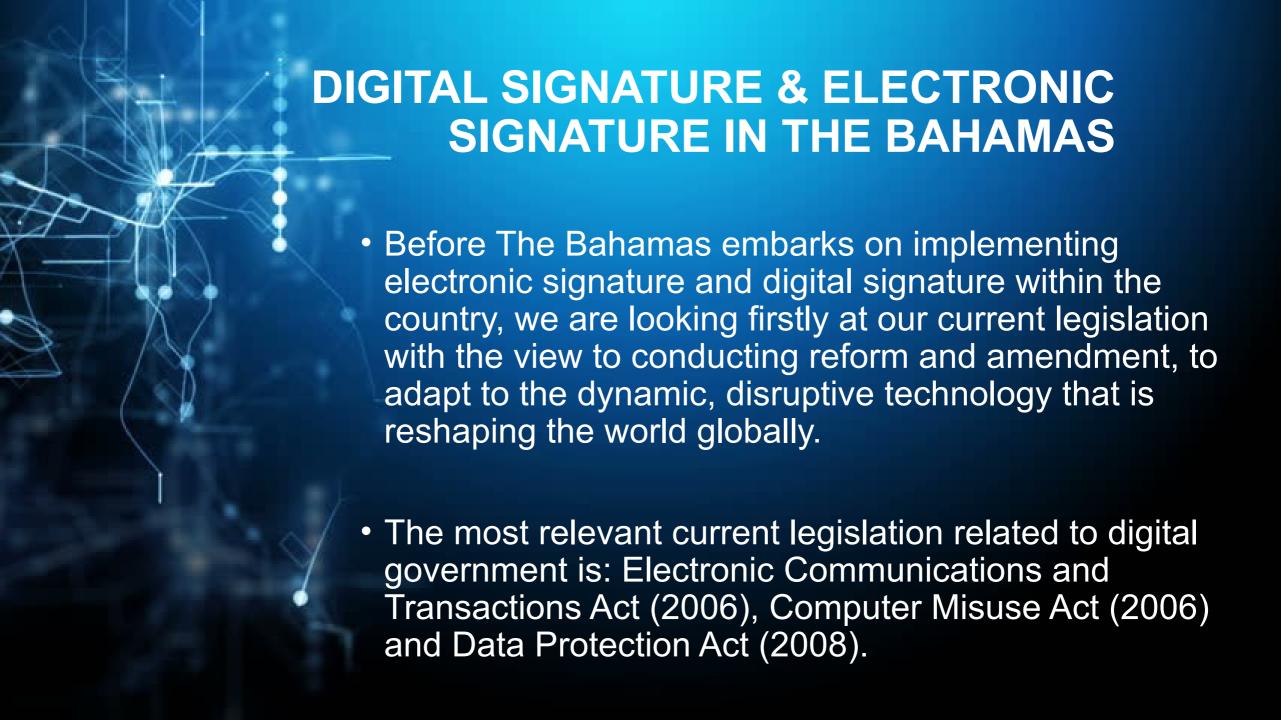
DIGITAL SIGNATURE & ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE IN THE BAHAMAS

- **Component 1: Simplifying and digitizing government procedures.**

- This involves the implementation of the digital signature and electronic signature, for obtaining on-line services.

- It also means implementing the key tools for the provision of government digital services - digital identity, digital signature, online payment, BPM, document management…[3]

[3]IADB Government Digital Transformation To Strengthen Competitiveness Loan Proposal Report

DIGITAL SIGNATURE & ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE IN THE BAHAMAS

- Before The Bahamas embarks on implementing electronic signature and digital signature within the country, we are looking firstly at our current legislation with the view to conducting reform and amendment, to adapt to the dynamic, disruptive technology that is reshaping the world globally.

- The most relevant current legislation related to digital government is: Electronic Communications and Transactions Act (2006), Computer Misuse Act (2006) and Data Protection Act (2008).

DIGITAL SIGNATURE & ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE IN THE BAHAMAS

- Review of legislation is critical to the this project. Such reviews will include legislation that allows for greater cyber-security and for data-ownership by the client.

- It is anticipated that a Digital Government Act, a Cybersecurity Act and an Updated Data Protection Act will be drafted during the implementation of this project.[4]

[4]IADB Government Digital Transformation To Strengthen Competitiveness Loan Proposal Report

CONCLUSION

Finally, I close by echoing a quote from our Minister responsible for this initiative:

"The goal of the National Digitization Project for Government services: "e-Bahamas 242: Making Government Work for You" is simply to better connect Government to the people by reducing time, frustration, and cost."