



**GOVERNMENT OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA**  
**Permanent Mission To The United Nations**

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As WRITTEN

STATEMENT

BY

THE HONOURABLE GASTON BROWNE

MINISTER OF PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND PUBLIC SERVICE AFFAIRS

HEAD OF DELEGATION

AT

THE TWENTY-FIRST SPECIAL SESSION OF THE

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

DEVOTED TO THE OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL

CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

New York  
July 1, 1999

Mr. President:

Honourable Ministers; Distinguished Delegates:

Antigua and Barbuda is a twin island state with an area of 170 square miles, located in the Eastern Caribbean. The country has a mono-cultural economy with tourism contributing 70 percent of our gross domestic product. Although the country enjoyed a high level of economic growth during the 1980s and early 1990s our vulnerability to natural disasters and structural constraints limiting our economic options, have resulted in significantly slower rates of growth in the late 1990s.

My Government is fully committed to the empowerment of our people and have implemented effective policies and programmes to resolve a number of the socio-economic and demographic imbalances that exist within the state. Correcting these imbalances have proven costly and unsustainable in some cases based on the limited resources available to our country. The problem is compounded by the continued emigration of our trained and skilled human resources and the influx of immigrants from the neighbouring Caribbean countries. This influx of immigrants has impeded the country's ability to properly provide for the housing, economic, educational and health needs of its inhabitants. For example, the accommodation of over 3000 **Montserratians** in their flight from the volcano represented an overnight increase of 5% to our population and this has taxed our capacity to cater for the needs of even our own people.

Since the ICPD in Cairo 1994, the Caribbean has been struck with four devastating hurricanes, and Antigua and Barbuda sustained severe damages. As a result, national priorities were shifted. Nevertheless, my Government has made significant strides in the implementation of the recommendations.

Mr. President:

Levels of fertility, infant mortality and morbidity rates are all at internationally acceptable levels - and Antigua and Barbuda ranks 27<sup>th</sup> in human resource development as cited in the UNDP Human Resource Development Report 1998.

The problems of crime, substance abuse, and the containment of HIV/AIDS are all priority issues for my Government.

Other areas of concern which are being given priority attention are poverty alleviation, gender and development, violence against women, single parenting, the care of the elderly and the physically & mentally challenged.

## Post Cairo Activities

Mr. President:

My Government has been working closely in partnership with various NGOs and the private sector to mobilize community and family support, in increasing the access and acceptability of reproductive health services to better meet the needs of our people in particular, women and teenage mothers. Through agencies such as the Welfare Department and the Child and Family Guidance Centre, the emotional needs of disturbed and abused children are being addressed.

To address the needs of adolescents and youths in Antigua and Barbuda, programmes have been implemented by agencies such as the Alliance for Social Well Being and the National Youth Organisation. Other initiatives include a Land for Youth Programme, where land is being sold at concessionary rates to young people between the ages 18 - 36. Also, a National Technical Vocational Training Institute was established to promote vocational training for young people in Antigua and Barbuda.

**My Government is especially committed to the empowerment of the socially and economically challenged.** We have improved the status of women at the national level by promoting them into senior positions within the public service. In the area of violence against women, legislation have been enacted to give greater protection to women.

Mr. President:

It is to be noted that despite our limited resources significant strides have been made since Cairo 1994 and with continued support, Antigua & Barbuda can move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a high level of optimism.

**There is much more to be done but it must be clearly understood that no country by itself can achieve all of the objectives of the ICPD 1994. Countries must work cohesively and collaboratively with each other and give support to the most vulnerable states. This type of alliance is the only one that will effectively realise the goals and enhance the aspirations of all mankind.**

Change has become a characteristic of our times and whereas, these changes, which include globalisation and trade liberalisation bring with them opportunities in telecommunications and information technology, they have also created further threats to small island states thus increasing their vulnerability to economic shocks.

**The Cooperation of the developed countries is required to assist small vulnerable states to keep abreast with these changes so that we are not left behind resulting in the dislocation and impoverishment of our people.**

It is the desire of my Government to ensure that our people enjoy decent standards of living and like other small vulnerable states, has had to borrow extensively to sustain economic growth and economic development resulting in a serious strain on my Government's finances. Additionally, we have had to borrow repeatedly to repair **infra** structural damages from hurricanes resulting in multiple loans for the same purpose.

The responsibilities of small island states are enormous and in the absence of truly vibrant private sectors to lead economic growth and development as in the Developed Countries, the tasks, performed by these governments have grown and become more burdensome day by day. The increase in expenditure and the reduction in revenue from fierce competition and declining access to protected markets, has resulted in fiscal deficits for several of these countries. **The per capita income criterion which is being used to determine the status of small island states, is unfair and misleading.** This has resulted in a reduction in the flow of much needed development assistance for small vulnerable states like ours. The level of per capita income does not always correspond with levels of development as there are serious and growing pockets of poverty in a number of these states which require urgent attention.

**Due to financial constraints, governments are finding it increasingly difficult to provide adequate resources simultaneously, for infra structural services and the alleviation of poverty. Hence, there is the risk of the poor becoming even poorer in these countries with the attendant risk of an increase in crime including drug trafficking.** We believe, that the distribution of wealth, the vulnerability of states, the evidence of poverty and the indebtedness of these countries should be given more emphasis in determining their eligibility as recipients of aid.

**Future assistance to small vulnerable states should be proactive and responsive to sustain and build their economic capacities in order to avert the disintegration of these countries to HIPC's.** The domestic social consequences and the attendant security threats and flow of refugees to Developed Countries would prove much more costly, without this proactive and responsive approach.

Mr. President:

In this regard, I call upon the more Developed Countries, to continue to lend financial and technical cooperation to these vulnerable states. The traditional donor agencies such as UNDP, UNFPA, PAHO, WHO, ECLAC must be encouraged to persist in their efforts to bring hope to our people by assisting our countries in expanding our socio-economic capacities.

Thank you Mr. President.