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**STATEMENT BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS,  
HONOURABLE MARK BRANTLEY  
DURING THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE VII SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS**

Your Excellency, Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Panama and Chair of the 7<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Americas,  
Esteemed Heads of State and Government,  
Distinguished Ministers of Foreign Affairs,  
Heads of delegations,  
Representatives,

Mr. Chairman, the generous and continuous display of warmth and cordiality that my delegation has received since our arrival in Panama City is deeply gratifying. The Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis further extends profound gratitude to the Government and people of Panama for welcoming its hemispheric brothers and sisters to the table of this Seventh Summit of the Americas and to discuss prosperity in our Region.

The Summit's theme, Mr Chairman, *Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas*", is a vital discussion for our leaders and my delegation applauds and congratulates Panama for placing this issue centerstage and for devising an action focussed agenda.

This theme not only incorporates the cornerstone of our hemispheric institution, but also epitomises the dreams and aspirations of our proud peoples who come from all walks of life. Simply.... Equality is at the very heart of our values and we commit to cooperate with other Nations to fight the blight of poverty that plagues the Americas.

The Seventh Summit of the Americas, the first Summit to encapsulate the entire hemisphere, has provided us with the occasion to put aside the myriad of differences that have divided us over the years. Differences that all too often are based on misconceptions and misunderstandings. Citizens of the Americas are demanding that we cooperate to overcome the challenges that stunt our growth and affect our cohesion.

Esteemed Colleagues,

St Kitts and Nevis concretely believes that this Summit has the capacity to reshape the region. But we must first focus on the issues that unite us and not bury ourselves in the ideological disagreements of the past. We have been mandated to transform our Region into one that promotes growth over conflict and harmony over discord, free trade over embargos. We should not let this golden opportunity dissipate.....we are Nations blessed with many resources and many strengths.

Mr Chairman,

In the face of mounting fiscal challenges, St Kitts and Nevis has an ongoing commitment to eliminate poverty from our twin island federation. We have tackled hunger and poverty head on with a number of innovative and reasonable policies which are producing substantive results. We also know that the issue of poverty cannot be addressed without focusing on gender inequality thus we have endeavoured to level the “playing field” for women throughout our society. We can never have prosperity with equity if women continue to be marginalised.

Health is inextricably linked to poverty and the Government of St Kitts and Nevis is fully cognizant that a healthy population is a prosperous population, thus we are working assiduously to implement universal healthcare for all of our citizens. We view access to free healthcare as a fundamental human right and despite us being the smallest independent nation state in the Hemisphere and facing all of the challenges that this entails; we view this goal as highly attainable and urge our Regional family to embrace this commitment for all of our peoples. After 32 years of Independence, for St. Kitts and Nevis, we postulate that this is no less than our fellow countrymen and women deserve. While I am on the topic of healthcare, let me commend and publicly thank the Government of Cuba which has been providing healthcare workers to St Kitts and Nevis for over 15 years. Decade after decade, Cuba and its people have exemplified the true ideals of hemispheric cooperation and for that we are immensely grateful. To this let me add our gratitude to the Government and people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela who have equally contributed to the healthcare needs of our small nation.

Mr. Chair, St. Kitts and Nevis is acutely aware of the effects of climate change on our vulnerable economies and the even greater negative impacts that the poorest sectors have to bear. With this awareness, our small island nation has established very ambitious goals to become a Green Sustainable Economy. We understand that becoming more sustainable is not a choice but a necessity for the livelihood of our people. In our efforts to chart a green economy, our Federation has engaged in energy projects in wind, solar and geothermal with the overall aim to reduce the cost of energy to our people, and of course reduce our own carbon footprint on the global front. Likewise, St. Kitts and Nevis, a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), understands that to minimize and mitigate the impacts of climate change, we have to partner with other nations. We need hemispheric unity with a heightened sense of urgency to equip our people with the capacity to be self-sufficient.

Mr. Chair, the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis remains resolute in its commitment to be a driving force towards a unified Hemisphere, one rooted in cooperation so that we may tackle and create solutions to combat poverty and strengthen the many facets of our economies. Our people depend on and entrust us as Heads and decision makers to chart a sustainable and positive course for their livelihoods and for generations. When we all leave the hospitality of Panama, we must leave with a charge...a clear plan of action for our people, a plan that address our shared concerns and goals that brought us here today and we must execute this charge with urgency.

Thank you kindly for your attention.