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**STATEMENT BY DR. HON. W. BALDWIN SPENCER  
PRIME MINISTER OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA  
At the Sixth Summit of the Americas  
Cartagena, de Indias, Colombia  
14-15 April 2012**

Mr. Chairman  
Colleague Heads of State and Government  
Ministers of Foreign Affairs  
Mr. Secretary General  
Esteemed Members of the Head table  
Other members of Delegations  
Ladies and Gentlemen

The delegation of Antigua and Barbuda is very pleased to be here at the Sixth Summit of the Americas in the beautiful city of Cartagena de Indias, well known as the heroic city and the door of the Americas. My delegation would wish to express its appreciation to the Government and people of Colombia for the exceptional hospitality and generosity that have been accorded to us.

We wish to congratulate the Government of Colombia on the timely selection of the theme "*Connecting the Americas: Partners for Prosperity.*"

Mr. Chairman,

This Summit is taking place at a critical time for the countries of the hemisphere. There is still uncertainty about the full recovery of the economic recession, incidents of crime and violence are on the rise and there is growing inequality in the standard of living and access to resources among our populations. My delegation hopes that the dialogue we will embark on today and tomorrow will focus on policies and programmes aimed at generating tangible benefits for our people. The people of the hemisphere are not interested in more rhetoric they want jobs and economic security, adequate health care, education for their children, environmental sustainability, access to information and communication technology, peace and security.

The ties, which unite the countries of this hemisphere, are many and our history and economic prosperity inextricably linked. Over the past three centuries, relations between the English-speaking Caribbean and Latin America have been integral, both in the areas of employment and industrial

growth. Of particular note is the contribution of nationals from the Caribbean who travelled to Panama in search of work and a better way of life for their families.

The same can be said of the United States and Canada where persons from across the Caribbean left home in search of new economic opportunities. Today, some of the largest concentration of Caribbean nationals living outside of the Caribbean can be found in the New York Metropolitan Area and in Toronto, Canada. We in the Caribbean feel justifiably proud that the hard work and tenacity of Caribbean persons living in the Diaspora have contributed to the economic prowess of our friends in the North.

Mr. Chairman,

For Antigua and Barbuda creating opportunities for prosperity has been at the core of the United Progressive Party (UPP) Government that I lead. To that end, we have sought to strengthen relations with our bilateral and hemispheric partners, have encouraged the development of people to people partnerships through NGO's and Civic Groups and we have also encouraged public-private partnerships, (PPP) which we believe are an extremely useful tool for infrastructural development in the context of the fiscal constraints which are confronting the in countries the hemisphere.

At the CARICOM level, Heads of State and Government have re-dedicated themselves to achieving tangible results from the integration process with emphasis on job creation and improving the lives of the people of the Community. We have long recognized that as independent states, with limited resource base, the prosperity of our region lies in our ability to collectively harness all of our resources, human, environmental and financial. The creation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy is evidence of our commitment to bring prosperity to our people. It is true that the pace of implementation of a single economy has been slow but our resolve to create a single economic space has not diminished.

At the level of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, another regional grouping to which Antigua and Barbuda belongs, we have sought to provide increased opportunity and prosperity through the establishment of the OECS Economic Union. The Economic Union creates a single financial and economic space within which goods, people and capital can move freely. We have also sought to harmonize monetary and fiscal policies and continue to work towards a common approach to trade, health, education and the environment.

I would wish also to express the concern of my delegation at the inability of CARICOM Countries to access some of the new financial facilities partly because we are classified as middle income based on our per capita income. Antigua and Barbuda believes that this classification is too mechanical and two other criteria namely, a **Vulnerability index** and a **Resilience index** should be used to determine access to the new financing facilities. To date, we have been unsuccessful in bringing about any effective change to the eligibility criteria of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) but we continue to hope that this matter will be given the due attention it deserves.

Mr. Chairman,

Antigua and Barbuda holds firmly to the view that human capital, life long learning and quality education play key roles in the development of society. My Government has therefore sought to

advance the education agenda focusing on early childhood, universal secondary and childhood education, teacher training, Information Communication Technology (ICT) and testing.

Cognizant of the increasing importance of knowledge based activities, Antigua and Barbuda has established the CONNECT ANTIGUA and BARBUDA INITIATIVE, the highly acclaimed, award-winning multi-component technology programme, which according to the experts has positioned Antigua and Barbuda as the ICT capital of the region.

At the micro level, this initiative has already resulted in direct benefit to communities with the operationalization of Community Computer Access Centers across the twin-island Nation. We have also provided 1600 laptops and broadband connectivity to teachers and beginning in September of this year we will commence a comprehensive roll out of computers to all school on the island

Mr. Chairman,

There is no greater threat to prosperity of this hemisphere than crime and insecurity. Crime and more so organized crime is a worldwide phenomenon and its impact has been felt throughout this hemisphere. Within Caribbean Community, security has been embraced as the fourth pillar of the Community and we have established a regional framework for the management of crime and security and there has been recognition

of the need for the development of institutions, instruments and initiatives and to strengthen bilateral and multilateral arrangements to adequately address the issue of crime and security in the region.

In Antigua and Barbuda our vulnerabilities, coupled with the current impact of the global economic crisis have left us susceptible to criminal elements. Much of the crime and violence in Antigua and Barbuda and indeed, in the CARICOM sub-region, is driven by the demand elsewhere for narcotic drugs, illicit sales and trafficking of small arms and light weapons as well as the trafficking of persons. This demand has seen our shores become transshipment points for the illegal drug and arms trade and we have also begun to experience an increase in the sophistication of criminal activity due to the deportation of criminals from North America and beyond.

We are cognizant of the fact that there is disagreement in some quarters about the impact of deportees on the increasing levels of crime in the region. We understand that some of our North American counterparts are skeptical about the finding that there exists a correlation between the numbers of deportees being repatriated to the region and the increase in the levels and sophistication of crime. Notwithstanding the skepticism, we believe that it is imperative that we continue to work together to enhance our commitment to information sharing and to strengthening the cooperation and coordination between Caribbean Governments and our North American partners.

At the last Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago, President Barack Obama pledged the assistance of the United States to boost the capacity of CARICOM Member States in confronting the threats from transnational organized crime. I am pleased to say that the CARICOM sub-region, as a result of the Caribbean Security Basin Initiative, (CBSI) is better positioned to combat these threats.

Through a project offered by the Organization of American States and financed by the United States, Antigua and Barbuda is well positioned to mark and by extension follow firearms that are illegally moving through the country. We believe this will be of tremendous value to security officials and will go a long way in combating firearms related crime.

Mr. Chairman,

Permit me to note, that despite our many successes in fighting crime and combating violence, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda holds firmly to view that this is but one aspect of the security threats confronting our island- state. We believe that addressing the political, economic, social, environmental and cultural problems in our hemisphere must remain a key strategy at the highest political level of our governments if we are to truly provide security and prosperity for the citizens of this hemisphere.

Mr. Chairman,

In the Declaration of Port of Spain emanating from the Fifth Summit of the Americas, Heads of State and Government recognized *inter alia* that “Social and economic development and protection of the environment, including the sustainable management of natural resources, are mutually reinforcing, interdependent pillars of sustainable development” and we pledged to improve “regional cooperation and strengthening our national technical and institutional capacity for disaster reduction, prevention, preparedness and response, rehabilitation, resilience, risk reduction, impact mitigation and evaluation.”

Antigua and Barbuda continues to benefit tremendously from the Petro Carib Energy Cooperation Agreement, which it signed with the Government of the Bolivarian Republic in 2005. To date, Antigua and Barbuda has already received over EC\$ 200 million in benefits as a result of its membership in Petro Caribe. We would wish to record our deep appreciation to President Hugo Chavez for his vision and for his willingness to assist the Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda in this regard. We wish to express our solidarity with President Chavez and the fervent hope that he be blessed with good health and healing.

In closing Mr. Chairman, it would be remiss of my delegation if it did not express its profound disappointment that all Member States of this hemisphere were not afforded the opportunity to attend and participate in this Sixth Summit. Antigua and Barbuda would wish to make clear that it fully supports and looks forward to the attendance of the Republic of Cuba at the next Summit of the Americas and will work with those delegations committed to this cause. Equally important, Antigua and Barbuda and indeed the CARICOM region, calls upon this august body to clearly and unequivocally urge the United States to bring an end to the economic blockade against the people of the Republic of Cuba.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman