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April 14 to 15, 2012  
Cartagena de Indias, Colombia

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**REMARKS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF BARBADOS,  
HON. FREUNDEL STUART, QC, M.P.  
AT THE SIXTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS**  
Cartagena de Indias, Colombia  
April 14 – 15, 2012

Mr. President of the Republic of Colombia  
Your Excellencies the Heads of State and Government  
Honourable Ministers of Foreign Affairs  
Delegates, Representatives, Officials

I feel honoured to speak for my country Barbados at this Sixth Summit of the Americas being held here in this historic city of Cartagena, which like Bridgetown in Barbados, is a UNESCO World Heritage site. I wish to thank you, Mr. President, and the Government and people of the Republic of Colombia for the warm reception that my delegation has received in this Caribbean city, and for the excellent arrangements made for this meeting. We feel very much at home here and are looking forward to the outcome of our deliberations. You can count, Mr. President on the full participation and support of the delegation of Barbados.

This Sixth Summit of the Americas, taking place three years after the Fifth Summit in Trinidad and Tobago in April 2009, presents the leaders of the nations of the Americas gathered here with an opportunity to revisit issues and events of great relevance to the well-being of our citizens and to review developments since last we met. It affords us an opportunity to reflect on how these events have shaped the moment we now face.

We are afforded the opportunity to cooperate on the crafting of strategies aimed at ensuring the continued development of our people and countries. We can demonstrate that this hemisphere, made up of large and small countries, with a mixture of races and cultures- English, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Dutch, all former colonized countries, can seek to improve the future of our people, through our combined efforts.

Meeting under the theme **“Connecting the Americas: Partners for Prosperity”**, our discussions on the five themes chosen: Disaster Risk Reduction and Management; Poverty and Inequality; Access to and Use of Information and Communications Technology; Citizen Security and Transnational Organized Crime; and Integration of Physical Infrastructure in the Americas, have allowed us to dialogue on the key issues that we must address to ensure the economic and social

development of our countries, to empower all of our citizens, and to safeguard and uphold their right to a dignified life on this planet.

I have chosen to speak first to the issues of cooperation, on which we have been able to make harmonious agreements. We have seen how much more we can achieve for the millions of people that we represent: from the poor and vulnerable to the rich and well circumstanced, if we work together, with exchanges of best practices and success stories, with shared developmental experiences and with a shared conviction to effectively tackle the challenges confronting our region.

This is no less than we are obliged to do when faced with one of the most defiant challenges in our history, that is, the challenge of the current global economic downturn which has stymied our growth rates and economic progress and which threatens to roll back the achievements so hard won over the years by the prudent management of our limited resources. When we have the fortune of having among us countries such as Brazil, which is now the sixth largest economy in the world, we can truly look inward for some innovative solutions that can set us on the path of renewed growth.

The other challenges that confront us in this twenty-first century, those of national and food security, of infrastructure, of the needs of our youth, women, aged and disabled persons and the most marginalized in our societies, are all found in the five themes. I must confess, however, that I would have hoped to see a greater emphasis on matters related to the environment, as we stand on the threshold of the Rio plus 20 meeting which will be held in June. I say this as the leader of a Small Island Developing State, which by its very essence lives the environmental reality of the threat of climate change each and every day.

In the area of disaster risk management, less than a year after the Fifth Summit we were shown clearly how a devastating earthquake wreaked havoc in our sister countries of Chile, Mexico and Haiti where the losses were heavy in terms of both lives and infrastructure. Haiti is still struggling today to recover but, with our assistance, it will gradually rebuild. I urge all gathered here to remain constant and committed to the cause of Haiti, which continues to rely on our support. The countries of CARICOM continue to do their part.

Disaster risk management must therefore continue to be a priority in our national policies and development strategies. The importance of hemispheric cooperation and coordination in this area, and of developing comprehensive disaster management plans cannot be overstated.

With regard to poverty and inequality, the Government of Barbados has long recognized its responsibility to protect and respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all its citizens, regardless of their status, and especially the rights of persons with disabilities.

Indeed, I am very proud and happy to say that in Barbados we elected last month a young, intelligent, female Senator, who happens to be blind, as the President of our Upper House of Barbados, the Senate. Her appointment was warmly welcomed by her fellow countrymen and women, and her capabilities, always widely admired, remain unquestioned and unchallenged.

My Government is also determined to combat poverty in all its dimensions and we remain committed to strengthening efforts to reduce social disparities and inequality. In all our policies to combat poverty, we seek to protect the rights of women and children and to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against them. We believe too that having an efficient social service

system defines a caring society and enables us to tackle inequalities and to ensure social inclusion. In that regard, we are about to implement in Barbados an empowerment programme based on the Chilean Bridge (Puente) model, another significant example of successful hemispheric cooperation.

Sectors which have been pivotal to the development of Barbados are education and health, and, more recently, the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). These latter are today key to bringing even greater access and benefits to our citizens in the other sectors. We agree that education is a basic condition for reducing poverty and inequalities in our societies, and for this reason education is free to citizens of Barbados at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. We also encourage the promotion of information technology through island wide Computer Technology courses offered free to communities. From one of these courses, a woman 90 years old recently graduated.

Our policies aim, therefore, to equip our population with skills which will enable them to function in the global economy and so we recognize the importance of providing state of the art training for our teachers for the effective use of ICTs in education. In health the application of ICTs will help us to improve health information systems, including accurate record keeping, which will result in more efficient delivery of health services to our people.

Mr. President, the security of its citizens is one of the cardinal responsibilities of a government. As a former Attorney General of Barbados I fully understand how critical law and order are to the safety and security of our citizens.

My Government has sought, therefore, to strengthen the information sharing capabilities of our Police Force regionally and internationally through training and education, and as a result we have enhanced our capacity to monitor and interdict drug trafficking. We have also on our statute books legislation to deal with corruption and money laundering. Community policing is also an important crime prevention strategy we have been employing to assist in identifying criminal behavior.

I fully endorse, therefore, the commitment we pledge as leaders of the countries of the Americas to fight to keep our citizens safe, and to promote the peaceful resolution of disputes, with special focus on our youth.

Barbados recognizes the advantage of creating greater connectivity in the Americas and we believe that our communication networks must be expanded to facilitate this. In this way, we will enable our countries to overcome geographic hurdles resulting in increased access to markets in the hemisphere. Priority must therefore be given to developing our infrastructure in the key areas of transportation, energy and telecommunications. We believe that there is a need for more public and private investment in the development of physical infrastructure projects, in order to be able to benefit from new economic opportunities. I am therefore heartened by the development of interesting infrastructural projects for example between Brazil and Guyana and Brazil and Venezuela.

We agree that we must harmonize our institutional arrangements to facilitate this needed investment and commit to bringing about greater connectivity in all our countries in the Americas.

I conclude, therefore, by urging that we take a fresh look at the matters that divide us, with the desire to build the bridges to overcome them. In the context of building bridges, I should like also

to support the call of the Chairman of this Summit, for new paradigms to be established, one of which would surely be the presence of Cuba at our next Summit of the Americas.

The Government of Barbados pledges itself to cooperate fully with all the countries of the Americas, in the establishment of new paradigms.

We believe that through close cooperation, and by coordinating our policies and strategies, and strengthening the bonds, values and traditions that unite this diverse hemisphere, we can make the hemisphere a prosperous one in which all of our people have the opportunity to live fulfilled lives, fully enjoying their rights and privileges as citizens of the Americas, and looking to the future with optimism and in faith.

Mr. President , I thank you all for your kind attention.