



**SMALL STATES
CONFERENCE ON
SEA LEVEL RISE**
MALE, 14 - 18 NOVEMBER 1989

ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

COUNTRY STATEMENT

Delivered by

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates

Allow me to thank the Government of Maldives for the warm and cordial welcome accorded to my delegation and myself personally and to congratulate the Government for its initiative in arranging for this historic conference on Global warming and sea level rise with particular reference to the implications for small island states. I consider this conference to be very timely as the high levels of pollution and the rapid rates of environmental degradation and habitat loss calls for concerted Global action if mankind is to have and enjoy an extended stay upon the planet Earth.

It is ironic but none-the-less true that this threat to man, has been caused by mankind's activities in pursuit of development, sufficiency and a better quality of life. While we have generally attained development and achieved sufficiency in some areas, do we really enjoy a better quality of life? I shall not attempt to answer this question, as to do so would lead me into a long debate but suffice it to say that in my opinion even if we now do, it cannot be for much longer unless we take positive action to remove the Sword of Damocles that hangs over us and threatens our very existence.

The shoreline of Antigua and Barbuda is extensively fringed by coral reefs that give rise to, support and protect 365 white sand beaches which together with the excellent year-round climatic The twin-island state of Antigua and Barbuda is part of the chain of

islands known as the Lesser Antilles and includes the uninhabited islet of Redonda. The islands are located at 61⁰ 55'W longitude and between 17⁰ and 17⁰ 44'N latitude with the Atlantic Ocean to the East and the Caribbean Sea to the West. The area of Antigua is 108sq miles and that of Barbuda is 62sq miles. While the coast-line of Antigua is quite indented, that of Barbuda is rather straight. However, about one third of Barbuda is taken up by the Codrington Lagoon. Both islands are low lying with only the southern volcanic third of Antigua reaching elevations of above 500' and contains the highest point on Antigua (Boggy Peak) with an altitude of 1392'.

Although we do not have the means to measure and monitor climatic change we have been alert to the growing levels of pollution, and environmental degradation in general and the global warming and the sea level rise in particular, and the implications arising there from. Two thirds of Antigua and all of Barbuda is less than 100' above sea level and infact the commercial section of the capital, St. John's is less than two metres above high water mark and is known to be vulnerable to the high waves and storm surges normally associated with hurricanes.

It has been observed that the ferocity of hurricanes have been increasing in recent times with Hurricane Hugo of 17 September 1989 being the first hurricane on record to attain sustained winds of 140 mph while it was yet some distance from the Lesser

Antilles. Despite the complexity of the energy system in a hurricane one none-the-less must wonder to what extent, if any, is global warming contributing to this increase in the severity of Atlantic hurricanes. The damage done by such severe hurricanes is usually both heavy and extensive and creates socio-economic problems that take years of rehabilitation effort. Even with the generous assistance obtained from international and bilateral sources recovery from a hurricane can be a long process as every area of economic activity is affected.

This threat to our economic wellbeing and existence has brought to the forefront the problems of pollution, environmental degradation and habitat loss and is a matter of grave concern at the communal, national and international levels. We are at this international conference focusing on two manifestations of the problem viz Global warming and sea level rise that are of particular concern to us as small, low-lying island states. The consequences for us should global warming and sea level rise continue unabated and at an accelerated rates are awesome to contemplate. I do not proposed to detail them and recite a litany of doom but suffice it to say that such an outlook does not engander a feeling of security, but it is my hope and wish, however, that this conference will help dispel that gloom and provide us with vistas of a brighter tomorrow.

My presence here today is evidence of my Government's concern and willingness to participate in the exercise of mitigating the

consequences of those circumstances. I have noted that our priority is to learn more and to have more accurate information about the rate of sea level rise and secondly to focus the attention of the international community upon the phenomenon and to develop strategies and measures to combat the peril that await us. Antigua and Barbuda support such an approach and will do all in its power to further the work done at this conference and towards the achievement of the objectives as contained in the conference declaration and any programme of action arising out of this conference.

Thank you, Chairman