

Welcome Address by
the Hon. Christopher P. Sinckler, M.P.,
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade
and International Business,
at the Opening Session of the High-Level Roundtable on
International Cooperation for Sustainable Development
in Small Island Developing States

Barbados Hilton Hotel
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Colleague Ministers,
Special Envoy,
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Excellencies,
Government and Private Sector Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to welcome you all to Barbados on the occasion of the High-level Roundtable on International Cooperation for Sustainable Development in Caribbean Small Island Developing States. I am particularly pleased to welcome to our region the representative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Iceland, Special Envoy Ms. Kristín Árnadóttir, and Mr. Sha Zukang, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. I also look forward to Minister Gísladóttir's arrival in Barbados tomorrow.

The name of Barbados will forever be associated with the issue of the sustainable development of small island developing states. Fourteen years ago, Barbados was honoured to be the venue for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS. Today my government is equally honoured to be the co-host of this meeting on international cooperation for sustainable development in the Caribbean. The sustainable development of the Caribbean, in all of its myriad dimensions, has long been a key priority for the governments

of the region. We are therefore particularly pleased to have the opportunity to explore further avenues to the region's sustainable development with Iceland, a country which the Caribbean considers to be a long-standing friend, a staunch ally and a sister small state.

In January 2005 in Port Louis, Barbados passed to Mauritius the mantle of leadership for the next stage of our quest for the sustainable development for SIDS. Barbados and the Caribbean are fully committed to the Mauritius Strategy. However, it is Barbados' view that, generally speaking, there exists a marked inadequacy of international cooperation, external resources and technology to implement the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy. The reality is that the vulnerability of small island developing states - as well as the economic, social and environmental challenges we face in the pursuit of our sustainable development - are actually intensifying and increasing. Key areas have been identified that must be addressed if SIDS are to be able to respond to the obstacles to our sustainable development. Indeed, the success of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy will depend not only on the efforts of SIDS themselves, but also on the level of engagement of the international community and a heightened spirit of cooperation and partnership.

It is therefore noteworthy that we are meeting here at this point in time to explore the implementation in the Caribbean of Iceland's programme for development cooperation with SIDS, aptly named the "Island Growth Initiative". This is an important initiative for which the government of Iceland must be warmly lauded. Iceland is well-known as an ardent supporter of small island developing states and has made a concrete and significant contribution to these countries' development efforts, including in the areas of fisheries research and training, capacity-building in renewable energy and private sector development.

Barbados is pleased that Iceland has not only accorded high priority to small states, especially those in the Caribbean, but is also demonstrating a deep commitment to development cooperation. My government would be very interested in seeing a formal relationship

put in place, at the regional level, of collaboration with Iceland in the context of a partnership for development cooperation. Such a partnership would not only be in full accordance with the Caribbean Community's Declaration on Functional Cooperation, it would also be in compliance with the eighth Millennium Development Goal. It is Barbados' view that the Millennium Development Goals will only be achieved if the eighth goal of a global partnership for development is fully addressed. The international community must therefore forge genuine partnerships for development in which both developed and developing countries accept responsibility for fulfilling their commitments. If we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the deadline of 2015, then the international community of nations must collectively mobilize the will and resources needed. Barbados therefore welcomes the opportunity to advance compliance with the eighth Millennium Development Goal in collaboration with Iceland through the establishment of a Caribbean/Iceland partnership for development.

It is important to highlight the fact that our meeting, which is aimed at facilitating the formation of partnerships between the Caribbean and Iceland, has both public and private sector components. These two platforms together form a strong foundation for the strengthening of our collaboration. My government believes that the private sector, the public sector and civil society have a central role to play in a country's development and we feel that initiatives such as the one upon which we are embarking today are critical in promoting investment and business development in the region and consequently sustained growth in key productive sectors.

In the Caribbean, we have several regional entities and institutions which are active, and even proactive, in the areas which will be discussed over the next two days. Indeed, the issues of sustainable development, climate change, renewable energy, fisheries management and ocean governance are of paramount importance to us. In this context, I welcome the possible conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism and the Fisheries Training Programme of the United Nations University. I hope that as we proceed in our

deliberations, concrete recommendations emerge for further possible projects and programmes for future partnership. Some possibilities which come to mind include technical and financial support for the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, research and development collaboration with the Cave Hill campus and other elements of the University of the West Indies, and capacity-building in conjunction with our development agencies.

In closing, I must once again warmly commend Iceland for its vision as is evidenced in its Island Growth Initiative and for suggesting the organization of this conference in the Caribbean. I would also like to thank the United Nations for its strenuous efforts in making this meeting a reality and for keeping these important issues at the forefront of the UN's work. It only remains for me to wish participants in the roundtable and the business forum a successful meeting. I trust that you will realize concrete outcomes for substantive follow-up and future implementation – the region's sustainable development is at stake.

I thank you.