



Statement by

H. E Ambassador Mr. C. Trevor Clarke,

Permanent Representative of Barbados to the

United Nations and other International

Organizations in Geneva

on the Occasion of the Submission of Barbados'

Responses to Recommendations and Voluntary

Commitments under the

Universal Periodic Review,

March 18, 2009

Mr. President

Distinguished Members of the Council

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government and people of Barbados I extend best wishes to you. I must first recognize the efforts made by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide member states, especially small delegations such as Barbados, with information and guidance to assist us in the preparation for this follow up process. We also acknowledge the work undertaken by the troika of Japan, the United Kingdom and South Africa in December, which provided us with a clear sense of the recommendations proposed by delegations.

I wish to formally introduce the document you have before you today as contained in document number A/HRC/10/73/Add.1, which presents

Barbados' response to the recommendations made by delegations during the interactive session of the Barbados' UPR review, from December 3rd to 5th 2008.

The Hon Christopher Sinckler, Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment, Urban and Rural Development of Barbados, in his opening statement at Barbados' Review stated "Barbados is a small island developing state with an international human rights record and a level of good governance which have served us well since our independence in 1966. Despite our limited financial and human resources we have been an active participant and fervent supporter of international human rights and the international system of protection for the most vulnerable amongst us."

It has always been and will continue to be the aim of the government and people of Barbados to build on this foundation and it is in this spirit that we approached the deliberations under the Universal Periodic Review and assessed the recommendations before us. We have always been cognizant of the need to ensure, at the minimum, the basic level of human rights protection for all citizens of the world. The preparation of the report and the consideration of the recommendations for this session reinforced this view

and proved to be a valuable tool for us to collectively examine our domestic system for the protection of human rights and our international obligations. This assessment exercise provided opportunities where necessary and practicable, to enhance and improve certain areas of our human rights architecture. It is clear to us that we will require international financial support and technical assistance from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, other international institutions and the member states of the United Nations to establish and maintain certain aspects of what has been placed before us in the list of recommendations. We call on the international community to support Barbados and other developing countries in this regard.

As a small island developing country with all the associated economic, security and environmental vulnerabilities, Barbados must approach this process realistically and commit only to those actions which are within our ability to undertake and maintain. Consequent to this the Government of Barbados cannot commit in the short-term to signing new treaties without undertaking a thorough assessment of the nature of the responsibilities involved. Barbados will however continue to give thoughtful consideration to signing and ratifying those treaties and optional protocols that are within

the limits of its capability and where the reporting obligations are not excessively onerous.

On the subject of the reporting obligations to the various human rights conventions, I can assure you that Barbados does intend to improve on its human rights reporting record and accepts the recommendation to do so. I must concede however, that human resources constraints still remain the major impediment to timely reporting and we will continue to support any capacity building initiatives developed by the OHCHR to assist developing countries in this regard. In addition, as we stated at the December Session, we are in the process of attempting to establish a human rights unit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and we look to organizations and member states that have expertise in this area, to provide guidance and assistance to us in this initiative.

I am happy to inform you that the Government of Barbados has undertaken a thorough analysis of the recommendations emanating from the UPR and the Cabinet of Barbados has taken a number of important decisions relating to the matter of human rights in Barbados. The Cabinet of Ministers has agreed to the abolition of the mandatory application of the death penalty and is in

the process of amending the relevant laws to reflect this. The death penalty however remains as a sentencing option under the laws of Barbados. Barbados is therefore unable to accept the recommendation, at this time, to its total abolition. It should be noted that the opinion polls and surveys taken in the country show that public sentiment strongly favours retention of the death penalty.

As can be seen in the formal responses to the UPR recommendations which you have before you, Barbados is actively looking at further revising its Constitution and updating its legislation to conform to its treaty obligations. As this exercise unfolds we will endeavour to keep the Council updated on our progress and of any assistance with regards to legislative drafting which we may require.

The Cabinet of Ministers of Barbados has recently considered a number of proposals to further enhance its human rights profile. These include a proposal to evaluate for implementation, the recommendations of the Constitutional Review Commission, especially in those areas that will enhance Barbados' profile as a staunch defender of human rights. The

Cabinet was also asked to consider drafting legislation on discrimination and torture, and further legislation on sexual harassment in accordance with Barbados' treaty obligations. In addition, the Cabinet has been requested to consider a method for the establishment of an independent National Human Rights Commission and to consider providing the Bureau of Gender Affairs with an increased level of human and financial resources, within Government's limitations, to enable it to contribute efficiently to the promotion and protection of women's rights. The Cabinet subsequently referred all of these matters for further consideration to the Governance Committee, which is chaired by the Attorney General.

Further consideration will also be given to the topic of migration and movement of persons and the rights of such persons, since the Government has already established a Cabinet Sub-Committee on immigration and hopes to have in 2009, a fully revised and comprehensive migration policy. This will involve the drafting of relevant legislation and the ratification of appropriate treaties.

Mr. President

It was just three months ago that Barbados underwent the UPR process where we received a number of recommendations from member states which they considered were elements that could enhance our domestic architecture of human rights protection. In that short space of time, and given the impact which the global economic challenges are having on all of our economies, especially the smallest and most vulnerable amongst us, I ask you to take into account the efforts that the Government has made to adopt where possible, these recommendations. There are some recommendations which the Government of Barbados is not at this time prepared to accept but be assured we have taken serious note of them.

I now have the greatest pleasure in commending these responses to the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Right Council.

I thank you

Ambassador C. T Clarke

Permanent Mission of Barbados

March 18, 2009