



Statement by

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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

June 6, 2013

Thank you Mr. President.

I would like first of all, on behalf of the Government and people of Barbados to extend warmest greetings to all Members and Observer States of the Human Rights Council. I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the Secretariat Staff in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for all the assistance and guidance provided to us during the follow up process to our 2nd UPR. We also acknowledge the hard work undertaken by the Troika in January, and wish to thank the delegations of Brazil, Libya and Spain for providing us with a clear sense of the recommendations proposed by all those delegations who actively participated and contributed to our review.

Mr President,

I would now like to formally introduce Barbados' official response to recommendations made by delegations during the interactive session of our UPR which took place from January 25 to 29, 2013. Our written responses, as contained in Human Rights Council document A/HRC/***** and its Annex, provides specific responses to the 115 recommendations which we received. We have considered the substance of each and every one of these recommendations and have sought, in a constructive spirit, to provide responses.

Mr. President,

It is important to reiterate at this juncture that Barbados remains committed to the UPR process. Despite the very real constraints we face as a Small Island Developing State, we have been and continue to be committed to a human rights based approach to development, to the

principles of good governance, the rule of law and ensuring that our people have the highest levels of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

The follow up process to our 2nd UPR and the consideration of the 115 recommendations which we received has further reinforced this principle. This exercise has been a valuable tool for us to collectively examine our domestic system for the protection of human rights and our international obligations. It has provided opportunities, to take stock of the advances which we have made and where necessary and practicable, to enhance and improve certain areas of our human rights architecture. It has also made clear to us, the very real capacity constraints which we face and the need for international financial support and technical assistance in order to establish and maintain certain aspects of what has been placed before us in the list of recommendations. In this regard, we continue to call on the international community to support capacityconstrained states in meeting the ever-increasing demands and obligations placed on them.

Mr President, I will now make some general remarks on some of the recommendations which we received.

During the review process in January, it was recommended that Barbados establish a National Human Rights Institution. Barbados views this positively and can accept this recommendation. The Government of Barbados has taken steps to transform the scope of the Office of the Ombudsman to include responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights. The necessary pieces of legislation to facilitate this measure are currently under review and discussions continue to take place at the national level in order to determine the structure,

operational modalities and funding possibilities for this additional area of responsibility for the Ombudsman's office. We are aware that there is some support from the international community to assist with the establishment of such an institutional framework and as such we look forward to collaborating with partner countries and organizations that have expertise in this area.

Several delegations also recommended that Barbados ratify a number of conventions. While taking note of these recommendations, it is important that we approach this issue in a pragmatic and realistic manner. As a matter of policy, Barbados will only sign and ratify treaties once a determination has been made that we can adhere to all the obligations and reporting commitments. As such, the Government of Barbados cannot accept the recommendation to sign new treaties without undertaking a thorough assessment of the nature of the responsibilities associated with individual Conventions. Barbados will however continue to give thoughtful consideration to signing and ratifying those treaties and optional protocols that are within the limits of our capacity and where the reporting obligations are not onerous.

It is important to state however, that despite the capacity constraints which we face, Barbados will nonetheless continue to take proactive steps to amend or prepare new pieces of legislation that could pave the way for ratification of some international treaties in the future and ensure that our laws are in full conformity with our human rights expectations and obligations. In this vein, we are pleased to announce that Barbados has accepted the recommendation to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and following our review in January,

the necessary instrument of Ratification was deposited with the UN Secretary General in February 2013.

Several delegations recommended that Barbados also strengthen its efforts to combat trafficking in persons. The Government of Barbados accepts this recommendation. While the incidences of such acts remain rare in Barbados, I am pleased to report that in the last year, great strides have been taken to develop mechanisms to prevent and prosecute trafficking in persons, while at the same time providing protection to victims. Barbados supports the global fights against trafficking in persons and efforts are not only being made to raise awareness of the issue but we are currently exploring the possibility of amending the Transnational Organized Crime Act to remove the migration criterion and increase penalties for this most serious criminal offence.

On the matter of instituting a de jure moratorium or abolishing the death penalty, we wish to state again, and as reflected in our written responses, that Barbados cannot accept this recommendation at this time. Opinion polls and surveys carried out in the country show that public sentiment strongly favours retention of the death penalty and as such, it remains a sentencing option under the laws of Barbados. However, the Government is open to facilitating and supporting public and open debates on the death penalty. Furthermore, the Cabinet of Barbados has recently agreed to the abolition of the mandatory application of the death penalty and is in the process of finalizing amendments to the relevant legislation in order to reflect this.

My delegation wishes to reiterate that the Government of Barbados is consistently engaged in a process which seeks to enhance the human rights of all our citizens. We seek to create a just, peaceful and prosperous society for all our citizens and our public policies and laws are consistently informed by the need to enhance the fundamental human rights and freedoms of our people. Our longstanding policies on free access to education up to the tertiary level, free access to primary and secondary health care, free and fair elections, our system of good governance, our social partnership and respect for labour laws and our framework of domestic institutions which protect the rights of the child, of women, of the disabled and of the most vulnerable amongst us, is a testament to this commitment to the rights of the person. We also believe that the recommendations which we have accepted here today will undoubtedly help our efforts at expanding the breadth and depth of our rights based approach to development.

In closing Mr. President, my delegation wishes to extend appreciation to those States who submitted very constructive recommendations. In the short space of time between our review in January and the present, the Government of Barbados has made a commitment to adopt, where possible, some of these recommendations. Although there are some recommendations which we cannot support at this time, please be assured that we have taken serious note of them.

I now have the greatest pleasure in commending the responses contained in document A/HRC/** to the 23rd Session of the Human Rights Council.

I thank you.

June 6, 2013

