

**Statement by Col. Trevor Thomas
Head of Delegation of Antigua and Barbuda
at the Special Conference on Security**

**México City, México
27-28 October 2003**

Thank you Mr. Chairman:

Since this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor, I begin by congratulating you on your election as President of this conference and by thanking you for the hospitality and generosity of your Government and people.

Mr. Chairman,

For my delegation the significance of the Special Conference and the Declaration on Security in the Americas, which we will adopt at the conclusion of the conference, have not gone unnoticed, for us this is a moment of pride and gratification. We are proud that once again we are reminded that with the collective good will of the member states, the OAS can accomplish great things. We are

encouraged that the OAS has taken a bold and courageous step to address the threats, concerns and challenges that confront the states of this hemisphere but more importantly Mr. Chairman, the OAS has taken a visionary step to improve the daily lives of the men, women and children of the member states we represent.

My delegation is gratified that the multidimensional approach to hemispheric security has once again been embraced by all the member states of this body and we are delighted that the Declaration on Security in the Americas charts a clear way forward for us to collectively address the new threats that confront our countries. My delegation believes that the actions identified in the Declaration should be the blue print for future co-operation between the sub-regional groupings of this Organization and within the wider hemisphere.

For small countries like Antigua and Barbuda with limited economic and human capital, sub-regional and regional cooperation have proven to be our most effective tool in combating many of the new threats we face. CARICOM countries are so convinced of the benefits of a coordinated approach for addressing the new threats, that at the High Level Meeting on the Special Security Concerns of Small Island States which was held in St. Vincent and the

Grenadines in January of this year that we spearheaded the adoption of the security management model as a mechanism which could be utilized by the small island states to effectively address the multidimensional and traditional threats in a coordinated manner.

You may recall Mr. Chairman that during the Thirty-Second General Assembly held in Bridgetown Barbados, many delegations from CARICOM spoke of the threat posed to the security of our states by the trafficking in illegal drugs and small arms, the return of criminal deportees and the growing economic marginalization of our peoples. These problems continue to plague our societies and have the potential to undermine our ability to govern effectively. They also threaten to weaken the social fabric of our societies and erode the democratic principles we so fervently cherish. My delegation therefore views this Special Conference on Security as an opportune moment for all member states of the OAS to recommit to addressing these scourges through the strengthening of Inter-American organs, agencies and entities such as CICAD and CICTE.

As stated earlier Mr. Chairman, there is acceptance among the small island states of the Caribbean of the benefits of combating the new threats in a coordinated manner. In Antigua and Barbuda we have had enormous success in cracking down on the illegal trafficking of

drugs and firearms through our territorial waters thanks in large part to the assistance of our sub-regional partners who comprise the Regional Security System (RSS).

As you may be aware Mr. Chairman, the RSS is comprised of seven member states of the Eastern Caribbean including Barbados who because of their small size, economic and human deficiencies have pooled their resources to combat the threat posed by drug trafficking and illegal fishing in our territorial waters. The RSS has also played a significant role in mitigating the effects posed by natural disasters. I commend the RSS model to all member states.

Mr. Chairman, the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001 taught us several lessons, among them, is the recognition that a tragedy or catastrophe in one state has the potential to negatively affect the stability of other states. Such was the case in Antigua and Barbuda after 9/11 where we experienced the decline of tourist arrivals and the subsequent downturn in the economic indicators; we are still struggling to recover from this tragic reality. We can no longer take comfort in the belief that geographical distance shields us because transnational crimes transcend geographical boundaries. In this regard, my government has been at the forefront of efforts in the region to eliminate avenues for money

laundering and the financing of terrorism through the strengthening of the Money Laundering Preventions Act and with the introduction of legislation on anti-terrorism financing. With these improvements, the legislation in Antigua and Barbuda is considered to be among the strongest in the region.

In closing Mr. Chairman, I would like to signal the delight of my delegation at the inclusion in the Declaration of the Americas of the threat posed ^{to the security of states} by global climate change ~~to the security of states~~. It is no secret that the Mission of Antigua and Barbuda led by Ambassador Lionel Hurst championed this cause within the OAS and abroad. It is a great tribute his tireless efforts that this threat has been given the recognition it deserves.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.