

Address by
Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs of St. Kitts and Nevis
Dr. Timothy Harris
to the Special Conference on Security
Mexico City, Mexico, October 27-28, 2004
(The address was read on the Minister's behalf by St. Kitts-
Nevis Ambassador to the O. A. S., H. E. Dr. Izben C. Williams)

Mr. Secretary General, Chairman, Distinguished Foreign Ministers, Heads of Delegations, Excellencies, Special Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

I bring you, and this plenary, warmest greetings from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of St. Kitts-Nevis, the Hon. Timothy Harris, who regrettably could not be here today to participate in this important Conference, and requests that I express his regrets. I greet you too on behalf of Prime Minister Douglas who remains keenly interested in, and deeply committed to the shared values and common approaches, as to the commitments and cooperation measures outlined in this comprehensive and historic Declaration.

The Organization of American States, Mr. Chairman, has proved its mettle once again; it has preserved its position as a trendsetter in hemispheric and international affairs, amply

demonstrating what can be accomplished when there is a coalescing of common political will, and an awareness of and appreciation for the important premium of common approaches and shared values.

Mr. Chairman, my government sees the Declaration of Bridgetown as an important watershed. It has substantially helped to reshape our perception, and the concept, of security in the Hemisphere. It clearly redefined the conceptual context of hemispheric security by allowing us to broaden our appreciation of the ways forward in addressing problems that confront us now and that are likely to challenge us in the future. Additionally, the Bridgetown Declaration forcefully reminds us that several old threats remain current and dangerous today. And it has brought us to a clearer realization that many threats which had previously been ignored and/or overlooked as such, can no longer be ignored, lest they undermine stability and growth in our individual states, in our sub-regions and indeed in our hemisphere.

The central theme of the Declaration of Bridgetown is that security is diverse in nature and multidimensional in scope and that it therefore requires multifaceted responses. I will hasten to observe that the Bridgetown Declaration speaks to something that

many of our smaller states have been cognizant of, and have been seeking to focus attention to, for sometime. My country is therefore pleased to witness and to share in this historic day.

My government applauds the process that allows us to stand here today in fulfillment of an important mandate from our Heads in Santiago de Chile and Quebec City. This, we say, is a glorious achievement. We commend the efforts of our representatives at the OAS and the goodwill from our respective capitals. We understand that the negotiations were challenging, sometimes even tortuous, but such are the dynamics of ensuring that we have a Declaration which reflects the realities of our individual and collective situations. Hence, we now have a document around which we can all rally and, individually and collectively, proudly claim paternity.

Mr. Chairman, we live in a new and increasingly challenging era. Never before in the history of humankind were we ever so aware of our interrelatedness, of the connectedness of our economies and other common challenges, and above all, our individual vulnerabilities. The advances that have brought us closer in recent times have drawn back the curtains of parochialism that previously veiled many ills which festered unattended in our societies. We are acutely aware that what happens in each other's

countries or in the sub-region, invariably has implications for us in another country, often sooner rather than later.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, we are compelled to seek common approaches to tackle the myriad problems that plague us. We must coordinate efforts and strategies to combat forces menacingly allied against us. We urge this assembly, as we challenge ourselves, big and small states alike, to recognize that illicit drugs, terrorism, landmines, trafficking in small arms and light weapons, or the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction can wreak great havoc on any and all of our societies; but so too can an epidemic such as HIV-AIDS, especially when appropriate, early and urgent preventive measures are not taken.

And so, while undoubtedly we must on the one hand track the drug traffickers, prosecute and punish them to the fullest extent of the law, smoke out terrorists and limit their capacity to perpetrate their evil schemes, we must be no less tenacious and committed in our fight to alleviate poverty, to bring affordable drugs and improved access to health care, including nutritional care and education, and to bring relief to the thousands of people living with and dying from HIV/AIDS today. Our sub-region, Mr. Chairman claims the highest prevalence of this disease in the

Western Hemisphere. We must therefore challenge this organization to marshal the forces of our collective goodwill and resources to help us address this problem with its manifold implications. And we must elaborate programs to feed the children dying today in the fertile slums and ghettos of our cities because their parents cannot afford to feed them. In short, we must by our actions, reassure the marginalized and the dispossessed that their plight is our fight. We should bear in mind at all times the entitlement and the power of the masses and for these as for the other equally compelling reasons, be committed to be their true servants, demonstrating to the people of the Americas that this Declaration will bring them hope and promise and not just news flashes and colorful rhetoric.

Given our collective recognition, and the endorsement by the Bridgetown Declaration and by this Declaration, that security is multidimensional and diverse, I think we have moved from the tendency to perceive of issues as threats, only if so deemed so to be by States whose strategic advantage they serve. It is crucial that we bear in mind that what larger States may not acknowledge as threats, by virtue of their being large States, may indeed be serious and formidable threats for small states by virtue of their smallness.

It is indisputable, Mr. Chairman, that we as a hemispheric body have made notable progress. I am satisfied that this Declaration is an important symbolic step forward in our hemisphere's recognition of things important to our sustainability and for the delivery to all our peoples on the promise of prosperity and better lives, in safe and secure environments. Let us now move beyond the symbolic and do the things that need to be done.

My government believes that this Declaration provides an appropriate framework to meet many challenges. We therefore willingly accept our individual responsibility in this dispensation and we urge all our hemispheric partners to demonstrate, each in their own way and according to their varied means, their commitment to the principles enshrined in this Hemispheric Security Declaration.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, allow me to thank our Mexican hosts for their very warm hospitality and the wonderful arrangements put in place to accommodate us and to host this meeting. I commend the Mexican government and reiterate the gratitude of my delegation and my government..... May it please you Mr. Chairman.