



Main Messages – Antigua and Barbuda

Introduction

The twin-island state of Antigua and Barbuda resides in the Northern Caribbean and includes the uninhabited Redonda, a nature reserve. November 1st 2021, will mark 40 years of our political independence. We are pleased to present our first Voluntary National Review (VNR), highlighting the Government and people's commitment towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2016, a ban on single-use plastic bags was instituted- a bold action by a small nation focused on improving the lives of its people and the environment in pursuit of sustainable national development. Despite this commendable feat, pursuit of the SDGs continues to be daunting due to vulnerabilities including, high indebtedness; susceptibility to exogenous shocks including natural disasters, extra territorial laws and health crises; an unstable global economy and a hostile multilateral trading system.

Nevertheless, the Government remains resolute in its nation-building objectives putting people at the center of development with the VNR reflecting our unwavering commitment towards advancing the 2030 Agenda, leaving no one behind. The VNR was informed by participatory stakeholder engagements with public and private sectors, civil society, academia, media and our youth.

Antigua and Barbuda's Development Thrust within the Context of Agenda 2030

Our people enjoy relatively high incomes, allowing them to live better, longer and healthier. Classified as a high-income country by the United Nations with a HDI value of 0.778 or 78th of 189 countries, is one of the highest in our region. A testament to deliberate efforts of advancing the economic and social transformation of our country towards putting people first. However, this accomplishment has inhibited our access to concessionary financing constraining our ability to have a country with 'no poverty'.

Regardless, we continue to place strategic focus on reducing poverty and income inequalities whilst investing in education and training. Juxtaposed, is our thrust to support the private sector through loans and technical assistance ensuring their internationally competitiveness and innovative. However, their level of global competitiveness and innovation continues to be stymied by unilateral economic blacklisting, threats to correspondent banking relationships and a hostile multilateral trading architecture.

A nation surrounded by water, presents an untapped potential for development that needs to be sustainably managed for current and future generations. In pursuit of a sustainable blue economy, Antigua and Barbuda is actively participating in the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Negotiations aimed at eliminating fisheries subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing leading to overcapacity, and overfishing.

Antigua and Barbuda’s Progress to Achieving the SDGs within the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Other Exogenous Shocks

Our thrust post-COVID is to “build forward stronger”, as we have approached the recovery of Barbuda which was devastated by Hurricane Irma in 2017. We are amongst the few countries in the world with a low rate of death and infection, a high rate of recovery, and no known community spread of COVID-19. Notwithstanding our efforts, the virus has caused many disruptions to our economy and citizens. Our recovery will be dependent on the equitable access to vaccines, global management of the virus and support of our development partners.

We have accomplished much under the SDGs related to People, particularly SDGs 1, 2, 3 and 4, in addition to SDG 8 which focuses on Prosperity as well as our foresight to prioritize the blue economy embodied under SDG 14; although challenges remain. We continue to be severely impacted by climate change; increasing incidence of non-communicable diseases and our inability to access concessionary financing emphasising the need for a recognised vulnerability index as a tool of measurement.

Our Next Steps to Accelerate the Localization of the Global Agenda

This is an opportune time to advance the global agenda realising the enhanced development gains to be achieved by implementing the SDGs, given we are in the process of reviewing our national development plan.

A national SDG Committee has been established and efforts ongoing, seeking assistance to develop a comprehensive communications and stakeholder engagement strategy and a MAPS Mission to aid in aligning the goals across policies and programmes and identifying accelerators to realise our development prospects.

We are motivated, determined and committed to achieving the SDGs-making our country a good place to live, where everyone is included.