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MINISTER OF WORKS, TRANSPORT  
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**STATEMENT ON WATER RESOURCES**  
**THIRTEENTH SESSION UN COMMISSION**  
**ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**  
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Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen.

**Distinguished Delegates:**

Please permit me to begin my remarks with special recognition of our esteemed Chairman.

The appointment of Antigua and Barbuda's Permanent Representative to the United Nation as Chairman of CSD-1 3 is clear recognition that even the smallest Member States of the United Nations have much to contribute to the UN; and to the universal Family of Man.

Antigua and Barbuda appreciates the recognition that this appointment confers upon our small island state.

I salute His Excellency, John Ashe, on his appointment.

Now, to the point of this session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Our environment is a prime resource that Antigua and Barbuda's gladly shares with the world.

Something in excess of 25 million persons now visit the Caribbean annually.

They are attracted, primarily, by the natural Caribbean environment.

It can accurately be said that the environment powers the economies of the Caribbean, which are dependent on tourism.

This is notably so in the case of Antigua and Barbuda.

**Antigua and Barbuda has been able translate its tourism investments and revenues into living standards that place us on the HiQh Human Development Index in the UNDP's Human Development Report.**

**The Human Development Index ranks Antigua and Barbuda number 55 among 177 UN member states.**

**Despite this high rating, Antigua and Barbuda retains all the vulnerabilities of a small, developing island state.**

**We can only get by with a little help from our friends in the United Nations network, as we continue to struggle to improve the living standards of our people.**

**Given our limited resources, the ongoing wave of migration to Antigua and Barbuda from other Caribbean countries makes this task considerably more challenging.**

**Notwithstanding this, we welcome our Caribbean brothers and sisters who have chosen Antigua and Barbuda as their new home.**

**To my mind, this follows a natural order of reciprocation that has evolved in the Americas over the years.**

**In essence, the strong in the Americas can be relied upon to help the weak.**

**Recent IMF studies confirm that between 1965 and 2000, twenty-five percent of the workforce of the Caribbean region migrated to other countries.**

**In that period, 35 per cent of Antigua and Barbuda's workforce migrated; primarily to the United States.**

**Monthly remittances and regular gift barrels from immigrant communities in the United States have been important inflows into small economies in the Caribbean.**

**This has been welcome in our efforts to manage a very fragile economy.**

**Antigua and Barbuda has been able to ensure that 90 percent of its population has access to improved, managed water sources.**

**I do not intend to settle for 90 percent.**

**My goal is water for all.**

**Antigua and Barbuda is committed to achieving this goal well ahead of the United Nation's Millennium Development target in 2015.**

**We intend to keep our pledge that we will leave no one behind.**

This means that we will leave no one without access to an improved, sanitary water source.

It means that we must find means of providing adequate supplies of water to propel the revitalisation of agriculture in our country.

We are committed to the installation of the first and long overdue sewage system in our Capital city, St. John's.

We are committed, too, to expanding this system to communities across the Antigua and Barbuda.

To this end, we are currently negotiating with an international leader in water treatment and delivery systems.

Water treatment and recycling will be a core component of Antigua and Barbuda's proposed sewage system.

#### **Distinguished Delegates:**

With all of this, Antigua and Barbuda is under constant threat of drought.

Deforestation is a significant factor in this situation.

Reforestation is an obvious option for treating with this problem.

As would be understood, I am gratified to learn that a UN member country is committed to providing financial assistance to facilitate capacity building for water management in small island states such as Antigua and Barbuda.

We can get by with a little help from our friends.

The rehabilitation of potential water sources, and the achievement of best practices in all 'round water management, will not, by themselves provide Antigua and Barbuda and our sister Caribbean Islands with water security.

I sound this caution with an eye on the hurricane barometer.

The Caribbean is conscious that we are just months away from the hurricane season.

We all remember that devastation in the Caribbean last hurricane season, when water became too much of a good thing for island communities whose lives had been routinely made miserable by **inadequate** access to water.

We remember, too, the misery that too much water recently brought to countries like Guyana during what could be termed "**Tsunami Season**" (sew-na-mee) on the other side of the world.

Nature can sometimes be cruel with her generosity.

Antigua and Barbuda, like most other Caribbean countries, face grim and familiar prospects of widespread damage and destruction to our physical infrastructure if we were again to suffer the misfortune of being hit by a savage hurricane.

It also means that we face very grim prospects of serious disruption of our water resources should a powerful hurricane strike our islands.

I pray that we will all be spared any such disaster.

If, however, we are again confronted with such untoward developments, island states that are dependent on tourism will be facing decimation of, tourism, our economic lifeline.

This ominous prospect calls for proactive disaster relief strategies that can make the difference between short-term crisis and long-term catastrophe.

It would not take much from robust economies to install essential capacities for water management and disaster relief mechanisms and systems in vulnerable island communities.

I submit that the critical challenge confronting this thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development is to hammer out a plan of action for the establishment of a Disaster Relief Fund to assist small UN member states.

Without such a Disaster Relief Fund, and without appropriate best practices, many of us in island states may soon be awash with misery in the wake of a hurricane.

When that happens, our only option will be to again turn to the international community for **emergency** relief.

In the light of this reality, I urge delegates to be guided in these discussions by the UN's acknowledged obligation to make its weakest members stronger.

On the basis that a drop of prevention will be worth a litre of cure, I urge this meeting to put in place whatever it take to enable the small states represented here to prepare themselves for natural disasters.

The alternative would be continued appeals for emergency relief every time disaster strikes, as it surely will.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

The wise choice, the only choice, is as clear as water.

**Mr. Chairman; Distinguished Delegates:**

When the Secretary General of the United Nations launched the "Water for Life" Decade, last month, he described the internationally agreed targets for water and sanitation as **an urgent matter of human development, and human dignity.**

For many of us, indeed for all of us, this is an extremely urgent matter of survival.

I am confident that CSD-1 3 will be the catalyst to new assistance and opportunities for all of us.

I thank you for your time and for your generous attention.