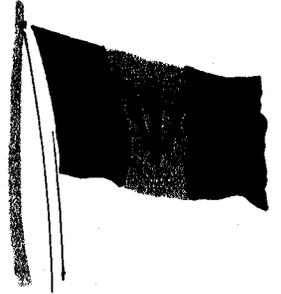




*Permanent Mission
of Barbados to
the United Nations*



STATEMENT BY

HON. H. ELIZABETH THOMPSON
MINISTER OF HOUSING, LANDS AND THE ENVIRONMENT
OF BARBADOS

TO THE

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 12TH SESSION
OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

APRIL 29, 2004

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK

Please check against delivery

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Delegates:

It is a pleasure to address you today. The Government of Barbados hopes that this first review session of the Commission on Sustainable Development's new implementation cycle and in particular that the new format of interactive dialogue among stakeholders, will add value to the international process and reinvigorate efforts for the implementation of the international sustainable development agenda at all levels.

This year's thematic issues are all critical to the sustainable development of Barbados. I am pleased to report that in the area of water, sanitation and human settlements the Government of Barbados is on course to meet the goals and targets agreed upon in Agenda 21, the programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

94% of households in Barbados are connected to the public water supply system while the remaining 6% have easy access to public water supply. In keeping with the JPOI Barbados has put in place a strategy for national integrated water resources management and elements of this programme are already being implemented.

Barbados relies entirely on groundwater and the annual renewable freshwater resources, largely from rainfall, are estimated at around 204, 000 cubic metres per day. With a population of 260, 000, the annual renewable freshwater reserves would consequently be less than 300 cubic metres per capita, locating us in the top 15 water scarce countries of the world.

There is a clear nexus between poverty, the availability of water for quality of life and development. Since the BPOA was negotiated, Barbados' difficulties in meeting the demand for water have become more acute and presents a real constraint to future investment and development in a tourism based economy.

As a Small Island Developing State, whose water resources are highly vulnerable to the effects of global climate change, we remain concerned at the lack of commitment of Annex 1 Countries to bring the Kyoto Protocol into force. Saltwater intrusion from sea-level rise and an increase in the frequency and severity of droughts triggered by global warming are imminent challenges for many SIDS.

In the last ten years, Barbados spent over US \$100 million in improving sewerage infrastructure. We are committed to spending approximately a further US \$200 million in sewerage the West coast of the island and bringing our sewerage systems into compliance with the LBS Protocol under the Cartagena Convention. This expenditure on sanitation represents over 10% of our national GDP.

It is estimated that it will cost over US\$ 100 million for an extensive water mains rehabilitation programme to reduce Unaccounted-for-Water (UFW) from the current levels of between 40-60 % to less than 20%.

Prime Minister Owen Arthur recently issued a challenge to the private sector to play a more active role in high profile projects including water and sewerage. Public-private partnerships are being contemplated from two main perspectives (i) as a source of innovative financing and the provision of cutting edge technology; and (ii) as a means of strengthening governance systems in respect of water resource management in order to improve human capacity and to ensure greater efficiency and the sustainable use of water resources. Mechanisms are being put in place to reduce our high per capita consumption.

Institutions such as the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) play a pivotal role in the sustainable development of the region. I would like to invite these banks to review their eligibility criteria to allow further inclusion in IFI funded projects by local/ regional consultants and contractors. It is also necessary for these development financial institutions to streamline their approval criteria and processes with a view to ensuring that environmental investment projects are approved in a more timely manner.

The challenges which I have outlined in the area of water and sanitation are only a part of the overall challenges that SIDS face in their developmental process. The International Meeting to review the BPOA later this year will show that SIDS have achieved significant progress since 1994, largely on their own. However, much remains to be done and we urge the international community to offer its full support to ensure a successful outcome in Mauritius and to increase assistance to SIDS in their quest to achieve development in a sustainable manner.

I thank you.