

**Closing Remarks by Sen the Hon. Maxine McClean,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade on the Occasion of
the Third Trade Policy Review of Barbados, Geneva, Switzerland
January 27-29, 2015**

Madam Chairperson,
Madam Discussant,
Excellencies,
Members of the Trade Policy Review Body,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me begin by expressing the sincere gratitude of the Government and people of Barbados to you Madam Chair for the able way in which you have directed these proceedings and for your insightful comments on the performance of Barbados' economy.

Special thanks are also extended to Her Excellency Tan Yee Woan, firstly for agreeing to be the discussant and secondly, for her thought-provoking comments as well. The delegation also thanks you the Members of this Body for your comments, especially your wishes for a successful trade policy review and success in our economy. We have found the interventions to be extremely constructive.

My delegation is also appreciative of the accolades paid to Ambassador Her Excellency Marion Williams and the staff of the Mission here in Geneva, for the advocacy on issues of importance to small states.

As small open economies, there are very real impacts which we face. The volatility of oil prices which are only now on a downward trend; the crisis in global financial markets and soaring food prices are illustrative of such factors. The issue of graduation, and the different faces of climate change, are also cases in point. We thank you for recognising that these realities exist and need to be accommodated in all negotiating processes.

I take the opportunity of this second intervention to reiterate a few points and to respond to some of the issues which were raised during the first session.

I will expand on our recovery and development strategies.

Several Members acknowledged the tremendous effort being made to implement the Medium Term Growth and Development Strategy and the Fiscal Consolidation and Economic Reform Program. These are multi-faceted and intended to ensure that key economic sectors contribute more significantly to the efforts to diversify the economy. Through this process, we are building better operational synergies and efficiencies in central government and statutory entities.

The importance of a number of the specific initiatives pursued by Government was cited. I will first address your queries on legislation in the area of agriculture. The National Agricultural Health and Food Control Program is intended to enhance the performance of the Agricultural Health and Food Safety System in compliance with international standards and this we expect will enable Barbados to compete successfully on a global scale.

The three major components of this system are updating and enhancing of the legal and institutional framework; institutional strengthening of the public agencies; and upgrading and refurbishing of the agricultural laboratories. This work is ongoing.

Simultaneously, the region is working collectively to strengthen agricultural health and food safety and ensure the highest standards for trade are developed and enforced through the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA).

Barbados is well-advanced in its efforts to update and improve our public procurement practices and procedures in order to make them more efficient, transparent and accountable. The new system will assist in Barbados obtaining more competitive prices and reduce process time while ensuring the integrity of the system. We will continue to monitor the discussions in the WTO in this area.

In Barbados, investment and trade remain transparent processes. The legal frameworks, including Barbados' expansive treaty network, serve to guide and facilitate investors.

In addition, our tariffs have remained at a stable and predictable level over the last eight years. Barbados has a good track record in honouring its commitments at the WTO. These commitments include the reduction of bound rates after negotiating rounds have concluded.

A specific query was raised on the implementation of ASYCUDA World and the Electronic Single Window (ESW). We would wish to highlight that work is currently being undertaken to modernise the country's Customs and Excise Department. The Customs Modernisation Project involves major legislative, organisational and technical upgrades to the Customs machinery and operating software in Barbados. The Government's aim is to make these operations more efficient and effective as we seek to promote competition, strengthen our revenue collection capabilities, reduce congestion at the ports of entry, speed up legitimate trade and enhance the protection of our borders.

ASYCUDA World is part of a wider integrative network, which would provide the platform for a paperless, electronic exchange of trader information among participants in the trade process. These improvements will also serve to reduce waiting time and encourage a more efficient business facilitation climate.

The Barbados Revenue Authority has already been established. It consolidates the functions of the Department of Inland Revenue, the Land Tax Department, the VAT and Excise Divisions of the Customs and Excise Department and the revenue collecting aspect of the Barbados Licensing Authority.

Barbados is in the process of reviewing its Intellectual Property Rights legislation. At this time, I take the opportunity to inform you that the current review entails an analysis of the following legislation:

- (i) Copyright Act, as it relates to the Internet Treaties;
- (ii) Patents Act, as it relates to the Budapest Treaty and the flexibilities under the TRIPS Agreement;
- (iii) The Industrial Designs Act; and
- (iv) The Geographical Indications Act.

At the regional level, Barbados is an active member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Caribbean Single Market and

Economy (CSME). As a party to a common market, it is expected that this arrangement will confer a number of benefits to CARICOM countries in the course of trade. The matter of the differentiated licensing procedures will require more time to provide a fulsome response. We commit to responding to this issue in a timely manner.

I take the opportunity today to inform you that Barbados has plans to enact legislation that allows for the full implementation of the WTO provisions on Antidumping and Subsidies and Countervailing Measures. Work is progressing at the regional level to develop legislation which also addresses these matters. On completion of this process, Barbados will introduce the legislation which responds to the requirements at the multilateral level as well as our regional obligations. The feasibility of establishing a dedicated Trade Compliance and Anti-Dumping Unit will be revisited by the Government at a later date.

Even though Barbados has the facility to conclude trade agreements on an individual basis, we have traditionally negotiated trade arrangements as CARICOM, the last completed negotiation being the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) which we undertook as part of CARIFORUM with the European Union.

Stakeholders in Barbados are working to ensure that we derive the maximum benefits from the Economic Partnership Agreement and the bilateral and unilateral arrangements to which we are a party. These trading arrangements have been brought into law and are fully implemented.

At the multilateral level, Barbados continues to be actively engaged in all negotiations in this august Body. The requirement to notify our Category A commitments as part of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and address export-contingent incentives are receiving the fullest attention of the Government. Our country commits to submitting these and other outstanding notifications as soon as possible given our resource constraints.

Our trade negotiations are informed by World Trade Organization commitments. In some technical areas, these commitments are reaffirmed and reproduced in the text of the negotiated trade

arrangements. We make concerted efforts to ensure that these arrangements are WTO-compatible.

Madam Chair, Barbados' Trade Policy has not been developed in a vacuum. It continues to evolve from a process of consultations which include the public sector, the private sector, the labour movement and civil society.

In our recently undertaken Foreign Policy Review, Barbados noted the rise of a number of economies. It is Barbados' intention to continue to deepen our relationship with our traditional trading partners and to foster linkages and relationships with these emerging economies.

Madam Chair, Barbados hopes that with this presentation, we have been able to answer satisfactorily the majority of the questions posed to us. We commit to responding before the one month deadline to all unanswered written questions.

We take this opportunity to inform that Barbados will make a submission which will serve to update the information in the Secretariat's Report.

In closing, I wish to reaffirm Barbados' commitment to the World Trade Organisation and managed trade liberalization.

We are mindful that with the supporting comments which have been made by the Members, our efforts aimed at ***adjustment, reform, recovery and sustainability*** will yield success.

Madam Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen I thank you.