The Government of Barbados

Statement on Drought

To the

Inter-governmental Preparatory Meeting
For the 17th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)
25 February 2009

Madame Chair

Barbados is among the fifteen (15) most water scarce countries of the world.

In addition, the effect of climate change in Barbados is being manifested in the form of shorter, more intense rainfall patterns which could have significant implications for other issues particularly, land degradation.

In order to meet the growing demands for water for agriculture and to improve the island's food security status, the Government of Barbados has therefore sought to enhance the country's capacity to harvest and store rain water as well as to divert surface water to recharge the subterranean aquifer.

Drought-relief studies and their implications for national development and planning have resulted in a drought relief scheme being put in place as the findings of the studies have been integrated into national development planning.

Faced with the prospects of less than enough water to satisfy national needs the following initiatives were undertaken:

- A brackish water desalination plant was established in February 2000.

- A strategic planning framework for the sustainable management of ecosystems in drought prone areas has been developed and integrated into the national development strategies and action plans.

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- The Ministry of Agriculture established an Authority to oversee the implementation of various policies and practices to arrest land degradation and restore land and soil productivity in areas undermined by subterranean run-off.

- The national strategy and contingency arrangements for drought preparedness to deal with drought related food and water deficiencies are coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture. Included among these arrangements will be the introduction of short-age crop varieties, establishment of salt-tolerant crops in areas served by arid, saline or brackish water, adopting water saving irrigation techniques, modernising irrigation systems and promoting the use of mulching. These initiatives will be supported by incentives when necessary.

Madame Chair,

The use of climate and weather information, forecasts, monitoring and early warning to mitigate the effects of drought are indispensable tools for the sector. The application of risk-mapping, remote-sensing, agro-methodological modelling, integrated multi-disciplinary crop forecasting techniques, and computerized food supply/demand analysis are tools not yet fully implemented or utilized by the sector.

The issues of forecasting and assessment of droughts are two priority areas for us. The challenge for Barbados will be to develop the means of expanding the hydrological and hydrometeorogical observational network that would assist the work of the Barbados Water Authority in monitoring and evaluating the water resources of the country.

Another significant constraint is the financing of our somewhat antiquated potable water distribution system which, although it has served the country well in the past, is in dire need of a major overhaul.

In conclusion, the Government of Barbados is seeking alliances with partners who can share in developing mutually beneficial monitoring, harvesting and distribution technologies which can assist in the better development of this crucial aspect of national development.

Thank you Madame Chair