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**Statement by the Hon. John Briceno, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
Natural Resources and the Environment of Belize
to the High level segment of the International Meeting for the
Ten-year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action
Port Louis, Mauritius
January 13, 2005**

The warm breezes rising off the Indian Ocean and the smiling faces of the good people of Mauritius is a welcoming site for us who come from the far reaches of the Caribbean region.

It is good to be in Mauritius.

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

The member states of CARICOM have come to this side of the world with our hearts weary from the pain we feel for our friends who have suffered so much over the past weeks.

We come in solidarity in this time of great loss and give our assurances to our brothers and sisters affected by this one singular event, that we too have joined in the international effort to assist in the rebuilding your communities.

Lives will never be the same again for those families, who we watch each day on television, as they bury their loved ones; comfort their children; and reach out to one other.

But from this great tragedy we find hope in the strength and determination of the people of the affected region and must honour their courage with our assurances that they do not stand alone, that they do not suffer in silence and that the whole world, large and small alike, will spare no effort to assist in rebuilding there societies and ensuring that we are better prepared to face such future challenges.

Mr President:

Many of us here today are the products of a collective effort to grant political independence to small states. The United Nations and its Charter, which holds sacred the right to self-determination, cradled many of us as we took the bold step towards ownership of our destiny. Our very existence gives evidence to the fact that the United Nations remains an indispensable organization for peace and meaningful development in our world.

In our review of the Barbados Programme of Action, nothing has been more clear than the value of partnerships in ensuring the sustainable development of our countries.

This understanding gave rise to the establishment of AOSIS, which was born in the margins of the Rio Conference where we realized that the only way to address the specific challenges each faced, was to do so as a group of countries, united in our advantages as well as disadvantages. The realization of those common challenges was to a large extent testimony that solutions could best be found if nations such as ours worked together to seek as our Secretary General puts it: "common solutions to common problems."

Since Rio the international community has been saturated with the concept of globalization. We may have many interpretations of what this means, but one construct of globalization remain unchallenged: whatever we do in any part of the planet has consequences for every part of the planet.

I am sure that no one in this room need further evidence that the adverse effects of climate change on our small states are directly related to actions taken far away from our shores. Similarly, actions we take at home, affect the lives of others well outside our immediate geographic proximity.

In the process of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of action, we have all come to not only recognize what is at stake for us, we have not only been able to recognize our vulnerabilities and what is at stake, but we have also come to understand that this provides us the opportunity to contribute meaningfully in the perseveration of our planet.

In implementing the Barbados Programme of Action, Belize, by putting 42 percent of its national territory under protected area status; in creating the Hol Chan Marine reserve one of the first marine parks in the Western Hemisphere; in playing a leading role in the planning and implementation of the Meso America Biological Corridor and in our coastal zone management programme, have not only invested for the sake of the people of Belize; it is also our contribution to the global effort to sustain our planet. Yes, we do this for ourselves, but all benefit from such environmental practices.

Mr. President

Sustainable development is more than the preservation of the environment, meaningful sustainable development must be people centered. We all know this. Just as we do when we invest in the reducing deforestation, in rebuilding fish stocks and in rebuilding biodiversity, so too we believe that in investing in the elimination of poverty, combating HIV/AIDS, invest in food security and in the development of the capacity of our people, we build our national resilience as well as contribute to the global effort to protect and preserve the planet.

This recognition of our interconnectedness is in itself a significant accomplishment; however this is only the first phase, now we must redouble efforts to better secure our future. We must invest more of our own resources in the socioeconomic development of our people; we must facilitate our people's ability to be as competitive as our competitors, to be the new inventors and the innovators. Of course our resources impede our ability to accomplish this alone. We have the will, we have the desire, yes the passion to be the inventors and innovators, but we need our development partners to invest with us in this shared enterprise. Is this not the spirit of Monterrey? Is this not what we said was needed when we met in Johannesburg? Is this not the cornerstone of the Millennium Development goals?

Resources exist among us, they may seem limited, but in working together we not only strengthen our argument for greater involvement by our developed partners, we also optimize the use of these resources in a way that benefits our entire human family.

Mr. President, the strategy we have come to Mauritius to adopt is to a large extent, partial payment on the agreement we made with the people of our planet. A decade has passed since our Barbados programme of Action was adopted and this process of review must now make good on its promise of meaningful sustainable development, which means many things to many people. For us in the Caribbean however it means doing things that benefit as many of our people, as best as we can, for as long as we can.

It means that the persistence of under-development must not be allowed to endure, therefore we must end the denial of social and economic rights for those who are lacking.

The future of all our democracies lies in the strengthening of our economies, protecting our environment, in reducing and relieving debt, better preparing ourselves for disasters and provides optimum opportunities for our people to realize their potential. This is our way forward; let us move boldly together to do right by all our people.

Thank you.