

**Statement delivered by
The Honourable Dean Jonas
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda
on the occasion of the
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Thank you Chairman,
Director General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

For those of us in Small Island Developing Economies, we must constantly seek to sustainably and effectively modernise agriculture and maritime economy to improve production efficiency, achieve food security and profitably create additional business and job opportunities for our people.

These imperatives are at the core of successfully realising the Sustainable Development Goals. Policies and strategic interventions must be developed and frameworks for implementation prioritized to ensure that we accomplish these reforms by 2030.

It is an open secret that we cannot effect these reforms alone. South/South and triangular partnerships that unlock financial and technical resources while simultaneously strengthening local institutions and building local capacity must form the bedrock of our shared ambitions to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Our collective commitment to achieving these goals must focus on increasing resilience to evidence based decision making and innovative financing for investment in technology and human capital.

Agriculture represents about one percent of Antigua and Barbuda's GDP, but notwithstanding our limited land mass, we are committed to increasing agriculture to five percent of our GDP, creating opportunities for youth and women farmers, to profitably engage in agriculture in identified areas and becoming self-sufficient in certain crops. We are currently developing programs using greenhouses and conducting research to inform our national policy.

The oceans are central to sustainable development globally. But particularly so for Small Island Developing States. Antigua and Barbuda has a combined land mass of about 440km² and an exclusive economic zone of about 107,909,000km². We are now focusing attention on the requirements for developing sustainable resilient ocean beached blue economies, in a region where the ocean economy is estimated to generate USD 400 billion. This figure is equivalent to 14 to 27 percent of the estimated value of the global ocean economy.

One area that my government is promoting, is the development of a sustainable fish farming industry in Antigua and Barbuda. We are importing over USD 1 million of tilapia fish alone, yet the opportunity exists to significantly reduce this importation by producing and packaging this fish locally. With targeted investment we can transform this into an area which meets local demand but also produces fish for export.

The impact of natural disasters, climate change, pose the greatest threat to developing our agriculture and marine economies. The 2017 hurricane season remains one of the most compelling examples of just how significant a challenge is posed to our region by climate change. Hurricane Irma devastated Barbuda, wiping out 25 percent of our GDP in a few hours. Our sister island of Dominica saw a 226 percent wiping out of its GDP by Hurricane Maria. The uninsured losses to the Caribbean region from Hurricane Irma alone are estimated to be between USD 7 billion and USD 15 billion and the insured losses were between USD 40 billion and USD 85 billion.

Antigua and Barbuda has demonstrated leadership as champions for clean oceans. By not just settling for the status of being mere victims of climate change, in 2016 we pioneered the first ban on single

use plastic bags and styrofoam in the Caribbean. We were among the first signatories of the Clean Ocean's Alliance. We seek to galvanise support to tackle plastic pollution.

While we are from different backgrounds and from different regions, and in various stages of agricultural and maritime development, we share one planet. I am confident that if we work together we can achieve the goals of food security, poverty elimination and by extension national and global security. Antigua and Barbuda looks forward to working FAO, after all, it is our vision for 2020.

Thank you all very much.