

Madame President,

I wish to conclude by restating our firm commitment to the observance and furthering of human rights not only in the areas determined by the UN system, but also in areas where we have felt the need to support existing legislation or practice, even in innovation.

The Board I chaired, produced a suite of draft Bills covering Freedom of Information, a revision of the Ombudsman Act to make the Ombudsman an independent figure, responding not to any Minister but to the House of Assembly. He or she would inevitably advance our human rights processes. There were also draft Bills seeking to prevent corruption primarily in the public sector and one amending the Defamation Act to make it possible

to utter honest opinions on public figures without running the risk of being charged with defamation.

As you will appreciate, these Bills most of which have received Cabinet approval, await the redrafting of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel to be presented to Parliament. In a more innovative manner, we have also created what we call the Social Partnership. This represents a process of continuous consultation between Government, the Private Sector and Labour. This has, in fact, averted many a strike action or an arbitrary dismissal of staff or simple abuse of the ordinary worker. So effective has been the Social Partnership especially in these times where has been necessary to preserve as many jobs as possible – two other countries have been attempting to copy our model.

We are also proud to be working in the direction of advanced technologies in crime detection and investigation and we propose to be a centre to aid smaller countries around us in this area.

Madame President, I return to the matter of size not as an excuse, nor a matter of pride. Out of necessity, we do believe that small is beautiful. It forces us to focus in ways that countries with greater human resources do not need to. It however, accounts for the philosophy that while it may be important to be correct, it is more important to do the right thing. Thus where we may be slower in reporting or enacting the relevant legislation, we always try to ensure that what we achieve is at least the best practice possible.

We try to be a total country in spite of our limitations, we participate in world sport, world trade and fulfill our obligations, financial and otherwise to the major regional and international bodies. We also have a main city, Bridgetown which with its historic Garrison is a UNESCO World heritage site. One of my colleagues who is also partly responsible for this designation said proudly, "BARBADOS THE COUNTRY WITH EVERYTHING." We may not quite be there, but we do try. To use a now famous boxing metaphor, we pack a punch well above our weight.