**Statement by Barbados on the Occasion of the Universal Periodic**

**Review (UPR) of the Republic of Panama**

**Wednesday, May 6, 2015**

Thank you Chairman

Barbados wishes to extend a very warm welcome to the delegation from the Republic of Panama and in particular the Head of Delegation ……..

We commend Panama for the work which they have put into producing their national report and the presentation made today. In examining the steps taken since the review in 2010 towards further strengthening the legal and institutional framework for human right in Panama we wish to highlight the following:

* We view positively the establishment of the Ombudsman’s Office for the protection and promotion of human rights in Panama and encourage the furthering strengthening of this office in the discharge of its very important function. We believe there are complementaries with the National Human Rights Commission which was established after the last review, and that a coordinated approach to the conceptualization of human rights policies and their implementation will strengthen the overall human rights architecture;
* We note the measures put in place to promote the independence of the judiciary with the necessary oversight by special court to ensure judicial integrity and transparency. The judiciary plays a crucial role in the protection and enhancement of the human rights of citizens. In this respect the consideration of a judicial tenure system could strengthen the judicial system;
* We commend the emphasis being placed on the prevention of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents and the provision of support to victims of such crimes. This is also closely associated with trafficking in persons and note the efforts being undertaken in this regard consequent on the ratification by Panama and the entry into force of the United Nations Convention and Protocols against Transnational Organized Crime.
* It is noted that the Report recognizes the existence of racial discrimination against the Afro-descendant population as well as the need for the protection of the rights of the indigenous peoples and the need to enact comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation prohibiting discrimination on all grounds. We applaud this and encourage Panama to place emphasis on bringing all racial and ethnic groups into the mainstream for a more inclusive society.
* We believe that a critical element in the protection and promotion of human rights is in the educating of our societies as to the link between human rights and the full development of the person and society. It is only through the exercising of these rights that development becomes less of a concept and more of a reality. In this respect, we are pleased with the focus that Panama is giving to the roll out of human rights education programmes across the school system. It is never too early to understand and appreciate the rights of others.

In concluding Chair, we thank Panama for their report and the very open manner in which they have addressed many of their challenges both in the report and here today.

Thank you