Introduction:

Antigua & Barbuda Is a twin island developing state, we are a democratic country governed by laws and the Constitution is our supreme law. The Constitution enshrines the fundamental principles set out in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

Antigua and Barbuda is committed to promoting and protecting human rights and is constantly reviewing its laws and policies to be in line with international human rights standards. The Government has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights.

In 2017 Hurricane Irma devastated the island of Barbuda when it hit in September that year as a Category 5 hurricane. The damage was horrendous, 90% of buildings were destroyed. With the help of UN agencies and support from International partners the rebuilding effort has been underway and successful for the most part. Despite the devastation Antigua and Barbuda experienced steady economic growth in 2018 and 2019.

Like the rest of the world Antigua and Barbuda was significantly impacted by Covid 19 due to the collapse of the global travel industry following Covid 19 containment measures. The international tourism industry which is the main driver of growth, income and employment in Antigua and Barbuda was severely adversely affected.

As major efforts had to be re-focused on combatting the pandemic, there was diversion of economic resources away from planned priority activities. Notably in the health sector, there were temporary closures of out patient clinics at the hospital, the countries only secondary healthcare facility and interruption to services at primary healthcare facilities which delayed the prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases such as hypertension and diabetes which are a major concern to the country. This distortion of priorities has thereby delayed improvements in access to healthcare.

Despite this we have managed to implement policies and proceed on development projects in line with international human rights standards.

Antigua and Barbuda has improved access to affordable housing. The Government has developed a number of housing projects over the past four years with 240 houses constructed and an additional 30 houses under construction. The construction and provision of free social housing to eradicate slum conditions has also taken place.

Improvements in the water distribution network has seen an increase in access to clean piped water and the construction of a Liquified Natural Gas power plant and the completion of two solar power plants has brought about an improvement to access to electricity and is demonstrative of the Governments commitment to renewable energy.

As a clean environment is integral to a good standard of living, the Government has placed a ban on single use plastics since 2018, being the first in the region so to do. Additionally Antigua and Barbuda has committed to eliminating net emissions to 0 by 2050.

Once again I would like to thank the delegates and welcome their comments and look forward to constructive dialogue.