



**THE GOVERNOR GENERAL
HER EXCELLENCY
DAME LOUISE LAKE-TACK GCMG, DGN, DSt.J**

**SPEECH FROM THE
THRONE**

Sixth Session of Parliament

**“Building a New Society of Growth and
Opportunity”**

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2014



BUILDING A NEW SOCIETY

of Growth and Opportunity

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE 2014
Sixth Session of Parliament
Tuesday, January 21, 2014

**Compiled and Published by the Office of Communications
Office of the Prime Minister**

Antigua and Barbuda. Governor General
Building a New Society of Growth and Opportunity

6th Session of Parliament (2014)
Available – Electronic, PDF, Print
World Wide Web Access: www.ab.gov.ag

Copies are available from the Office of the Prime Minister, Queen Elizabeth
Highway, Communications Division (268-462-9766)

Photo credits: Maurice F. Merchant – Director General of Communications,
Office of the Prime Minister

Printed by the Government Printery

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**Her Excellency Dame Louise Lake-Tack GCMG, DGN, DSt.J
Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda**

Madame President and Members of the Senate:

Madame Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives:

I sit here before you today to present the Speech from the Throne as a proud Antiguan and Barbudan, congratulating you all on this the Sixth Session of Parliament of our great nation.

I bear New Year Greetings, wishes for a successful Parliamentary Year and the deep affection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Antigua and Barbuda.

As we enter a new Parliamentary Year and as My Government moves forward in building a New Society of Growth and Opportunity, I wish to call to mind the first verse of our National Anthem, which truly defines the spirit and the character of the Antiguan and Barbudan people.

It reads:

*Fair Antigua and Barbuda,
We thy sons and daughters stand,
Strong and firm in peace or danger
To safe guard our native land.
We commit ourselves to building
A true nation brave and free.
Ever striving, ever seeking,
Dwell in love and unity.*

Over the past ten years, my Government has successfully built a strong foundation for Antigua and Barbuda always focusing on ensuring that the people of our great nation remain first.

It is on the strength of these same words that my Government will move Antigua and Barbuda forward to the year 2020, *building a new society of growth and opportunity*.

As Parliamentarians, as patriotic Citizens of Antigua and Barbuda, we assemble here today conscious of the fact that the citizens and residents of this country whom we serve, hold us in high expectation.

Now more than ever, the eyes and ears and expectations of Antiguan and Barbudans are focused on us the members of this august body. They have placed their trust in us for the past five years. It is my Government's intention to continue relentlessly to safeguard this nation, to build a society of growth and opportunity and to do all of this together – hand in hand with the people of our nation.

My Government will not disappoint. My Government will remain committed to building that New Society.

Madame President and Members of the Senate:

Madame Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives:

I do not propose today to preempt the imminent budget presentation. Rather, I will briefly summarize the plans for 2014 of my Government that is

guiding our country's ongoing transformation from insolvency to stability; and from decline to expansion – building a New Society of growth and opportunity.

Antigua and Barbuda ended 2013 having experienced growth for a second consecutive year, after three years of recession. Our fiscal and economic outlook is no longer foreshadowed by decline and inactivity. In the face of almost undefeatable odds, my Government has stayed the course, and it is working!

Naturally, therefore, in 2014 my Government will continue to build on these gains: to consolidate our restructuring efforts; to equip our citizens and residents with the wherewithal to impact our development; and to provide an environment in which the private sector will flourish as the main engine of economic growth.

Once again, my Government acknowledges and applauds those members of the business community who have stepped forward thus far, to partner with the government on such programmes as the Construct Antigua Barbuda Initiative, the Small Business Credit Guarantee Scheme, and the Mind Your Business programme. It is anticipated that such collaboration will escalate this year, particularly in the areas of skills training and work experience.

Among the initiatives in this regard is the Enterprise Achievement Challenge, which places successful applicants with skills-based enterprises with a view to preparing them to undertake sustainable self-employment. My Government's Employment and Training Opportunities Programme is yet

another initiative to build workforce capacity among our people through life skills training, retraining and competency certification. It must be noted that these programmes variously target youth, single mothers, and persons between the ages of 17 and 50.

Parliamentarians:

My Government recognizes the importance of investment, both foreign and domestic, to the economic fortunes of our nation. That is why we enacted sunset legislation in the form of the Tourism and Business (Special Incentives) Act. This legislation will facilitate existing investors who wish to expand, as well as potential entrepreneurs, by offering them an alluring package of concessions during the next two years.

My Government is also aware that the kind of investment we envisage to move this country forward requires a high standard of infrastructure, the funding for which has hitherto not been forthcoming on the scale we require. However, in 2014 we will greatly increase expenditure on our roads, schools, health care facilities and historic sites.

These initiatives will be bolstered by a number of capital projects in various stages of development, including the Antigua Department of Marine Services office complex; and the State Insurance Corporation/Government office building.

Our tremendous strides in revenue and expenditure reform cannot be understated, for our triumphs are due in no small measure to the

reorganization of our Customs, Inland Revenue and Treasury functions. We will continue to reap the benefits of these reforms in the coming year.

My Government continues to be thankful for the contribution of our development partners to our successes thus far: To the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Union, the Caribbean Technical Assistance Centre, the Caribbean Development Bank, the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, and the British Department for International Development whose technical and/or financial assistance has enabled this journey, along with the support of friendly countries: The People's Republic of China, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Republic of Cuba, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States of America, Brazil, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and member countries of the ECCU and wider Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Madame President and Members of the Senate:

Madame Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives:

As the economies of the world enter a period of recovery from a global recession, before Antiguans and Barbudans lie an opportunity; an opportunity to answer to our nation's call to duty – to the service of our country.

It is also the opportunity for us to summon the courage of our National Hero Prince Klass and the determination of Sir V. C. Bird Sr., to build a nation of growth and opportunity for our children and our children's children.

It is our moment to move forward – to move forward together.

My Government's next steps will see further boosting of economic activity, the main outcome of which focuses on the imperative to continue to generate employment.

These interventions form part of the Revitalize and Empower for Economic Advancement Programme (REAP), the objective of which has always been to further stimulate economic growth by encouraging investment and private sector activity and empowering citizens and residents, especially the youth and the unemployed.

With my Government's efforts pointing in the direction of job creation, the revitalization element of the REAP will focus on five strategic interventions:

1. *Construct Antigua Barbuda Initiative (CABI)*
2. *Tourism and Business Incentives Act*
3. *Leadership through Excellence Award Programme (LEAP)*
4. *Antigua and Barbuda Skills Training and Empowerment Programme (ABSTEP); and*
5. *Enterprise Achievement Challenge (EACH) Project.*

My Government believes that these interventions will not only enhance the quality of life for all citizens but, more strategically, they will open up a new environment within which more job opportunities will be generated.

These job creation initiatives will enable Antigua and Barbuda to return to the historic period of 2008 shortly prior to the advent of the world economic crisis when Antigua and Barbuda, under my Government, set the enviable example to the world at large of a small nation with a proud record of almost full employment.

My Government, while mindful and proud of this remarkable record, hasten to propose that we must not take our eyes off the medium to long term and therefore must prepare ourselves dutifully and diligently for the changing patterns of life which are being dictated by the dramatic pace of evolution in science and technology.

It is a reality that we must face if we are to compete in the fast lane which has now become the norm of modern day civilization.

It is the reason why, as my Government works to provide employment for one and all, it is duty bound to look ahead at the medium to long term and prepare our young charges in particular for the complex and complicated world which they have already begun to gaze upon.

Parliamentarians:

It is against this background, that my Government awarded over 3000 scholarships to our young brilliant citizens. This was conceptualized for the most part with a clear vision in mind: a vision of the technologically advancing and aggressively competitive world which has crept up upon us.

That is why my Government has spared no effort in repositioning the education agenda for Antigua and Barbuda.

My Government's track record in fulfilling an agenda of change for Antigua and Barbuda is enviable. My Government was able to intelligently and caringly, and at times miraculously navigated the rough waters of a global economy in financial crisis.

My Government's record in doing the greatest good for our young people in education is unmatched by any other administration that has governed Antigua and Barbuda.

From the school meals and uniform programmes, the computer access centres initiative, the computer tablet and 4G broadband internet programme, the pre-school education programme, the GATE initiative, the LEAP programme, to the National Student Loan Fund and scholarship programmes – we have laid a solid foundation in building a new society.

On September 2nd this year, Antigua and Barbuda achieved Universal Secondary Education enabling an environment that is all embracing, fair and just. All students who completed primary education in Grade 6, now automatically move on to secondary school.

On our sister island of Barbuda, with the aid of the Caribbean Development Bank, work will commence, on the Sir McChesney George Secondary School for additional classrooms and specialized rooms to meet the challenges of Universal Secondary Education.

Work will also commence on the expansion of the Irene B. Williams Secondary and the St. Mary's Secondary Schools. In November last year,

government broke ground for the construction of a Secondary school in Five Islands to be funded by the Government of the People's Republic of China. Another ceremony will take place shortly for another secondary school to be constructed in Tomlinson's.

Government is also cognizant that quality education to a great extent is derived from quality teachers, therefore, teachers will continue to receive training with emphasis being placed on primary school teachers and teachers in the secondary school system with first degrees.

The Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda also recently signed on to the Agreement that will allow the reclassification of teachers to come on stream in 2014. This initiative will guarantee that our teachers are adequately paid for their efforts.

With over ten million dollars spent last year in the granting of scholarships to our young people for tertiary level education through the Board of Education, the National Student Loan Fund and the Prime Minister's Scholarship Programme, my Government remains on course to guarantee that it meets the guidelines set by the OECS Education Strategy for training the nation's youth.

My Government's strategy is one whereby we do not only seek functional literacy in Antigua and Barbuda, but good quality education – accessible, equitable and available to every boy and girl who require an education.

On the present path, education will undergo a major revolution to make certain that Antigua and Barbuda becomes a fully educated, modern, progressive nation.

The progress in education over the past nine years is indelible testimony that my Government remains committed to the development of our young people, empowering them with the tools necessary for sustainable economic development.

Education remains on a structured and dedicated course and in safe hands.

Parliamentarians:

My Government has totally revolutionized the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in our twin island Nation and has ensured that ICTs and their empowering potential have reached the doorsteps of the ordinary man and woman as well as thousands of students and Government employees.

This empowering phenomenon has manifested itself with Antigua and Barbuda being the ICT capital of the Caribbean for the last ten years.

A number of firsts have marked our meteoric rise. These include cupping regional and international awards and notoriety for both the Connect Antigua and Barbuda Initiative and the Government Assisted Technology Endeavour (GATE).

Under GATE, thousands of secondary school students and teachers have already received cutting-edge computer tablets and 4G LTE Internet connectivity. The connectivity is assured free to students until 2017.

The GATE ICT Cadet Training Facility has attracted international attention as far away as the Pacific Region, as scores of young Antiguan and Barbudans continue to receive advanced hands-on training in photography, videography and new media techniques as well as training in computer repairs, upgrades and diagnostics.

In 2014, my Government will place up to five hundred cadets in training at the GATE ICT cadet training facility, whilst preparing them for the real world of work.

Early in 2014, my Government will fully launch HEART, the HUMAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP and ASSISTIVE RESOURCE TECHNOLOGIES project.

HEART will make a tangible and virtual impact on thousands of lives and will represent a unique blend of entrepreneurship and social responsibility. HEART will inspire people to challenge their boundaries and embrace new ideas.

Under HEART, my Government will fashion and adopt an Accessible Technology Charter and appoint an e-Inclusion Champion as my Government rolls out the most comprehensive ICT platform for any person with any challenge. HEART will solidify my Government's commitment to

special needs persons as well as those who have been diagnosed with dyslexia, autism, among others.

In early, 2014, my Government, in partnership with the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation, will host a pan-Caribbean conference on e-accessibility and will train to university level two of our brightest minds in the most optimal methods for deploying ICTs for use by persons with disabilities and challenges so that a real difference can be made in their lives.

Fifteen separate institutions will benefit from HEART, including the Mount Saint John Medical Centre, the Clarevue Hospital, the Fiennes Institute as well as the Adele School, the Unit for the Blind and the School for the Deaf.

HEART will also have at its epicenter training in ICTs and entrepreneurship. In early 2014, my Government will provide entrepreneurship training to over five hundred persons and businesses, as well as provide an ICT incubator model for high school and college graduates and entrepreneurs.

This ICT business incubator model will include direct financial support for a sustained, home grown, Mobile App Development thrust. In this regard, my Government will sign onto a US \$10 million loan with the World Bank to further leap frog the ICT sector and to position Antigua and Barbuda not just as the ICT Capital of the Caribbean but also as a first rate, internationally competitive ICT Innovation and Mobile App Development country.

In 2014, my Government will also partner with a leading private sector outfit

to build and commission a state of the art Data Centre that will meet Government's data warehousing requirements until the year 2030. This new Data Centre will also leverage on modern, cloud computing solutions for non-mission critical operations of Government.

In 2014, my Government will also deploy cutting edge 4G LTE connectivity in every school library and in every place of learning, as well as in every district medical clinic and in every police and fire station. Up to five hundred locations will benefit from this technology, as Antigua and Barbuda begins to surpass the 90% Internet penetration rate.

In addition my Government is fully aware that connected citizens are becoming increasingly central to humanitarian emergency response and recovery. Powered by cloud, crowd and SMS-based technologies, citizens can engage in disaster response at an unprecedented level.

In furtherance of this awareness, my Government will begin developing a three-year, phased approach to developing a "crowd sourcing" disaster response platform as well as an ICT enabled early warning system. Both of these would enable multiple public safety agencies to push messages as quickly and efficiently as possible before, during and after disasters.

Madame President and Members of the Senate:

Madame Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives:

My Government considers the Tourism and Hospitality sector to be the main strategic thrust not only for the development of the nation, but more importantly, to foster the continued upturn of the economy following the global economic crisis.

Prior to the global crisis, our small but beautiful nation state was magnificently poised for high sustainable growth in the tourism sector.

My Government, through imaginative, strong and decisive leadership was able to save the sector from the nightmares witnessed by other countries practicing and competing in this global industry.

The target in 2014 is to improve Antigua and Barbuda's position in global tourism, and particularly in terms of global tourism receipts, contribution to GDP, and increases in jobs creation. In this context, in 2014, my Government pledges to continue the task of:

- ✓ Extending the season and diversifying the country's supply of tourist services;
- ✓ Training, skills development and building capacity of members of staff in the Ministry and in the hospitality and tourism industry, in general; and
- ✓ Enhancing the safety and security of the sector.

My Government believes that multi-level co-operation among key players is a critical factor in promoting innovation in tourism and a broad participation of a wide range of public and private sector organizations in the development and implementation of effective tourism strategies.

In this context, my Government will seek to strengthen inter-ministerial coordination, build greater collaboration between the public and private sectors, and encourage, support and institutionalize a National Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC).

The Tourism Advisory Committee will advise the Minister on all matters with respect to the development, implementation and monitoring of the National Tourism Sustainable Development Plan.

In 2014, my Government will intensify its efforts to reposition the image of Antigua and Barbuda's tourism to include not only world renowned 'sun and sea' experience but also to include more 'high-value special interest tourism'. Working with the National Parks Authority and other private sector partners, my Government will seek to create at least one world heritage site within the next few years.

Parliamentarians:

My Government during this Parliamentary Year intends on continuing its programme of improving Health Services at the community level and, in particular, at the Mount St. John Medical Centre.

Our immediate importance to my Government is the upgrade and repair of the existing health facilities. Early this year, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Public Works will collaborate on a comprehensive plan for addressing the issue of health care facilities.

Also early this quarter, two new ambulances will be added to the existing fleet. In addition, another EMS station will be commissioned in the All Saints area for a more efficient response to emergencies. To accomplish this, additional persons will be trained as Emergency Medical Technicians.

Efforts will also be advanced to open additional Vision Centres to compliment those in the Johnson's Point, Clarehall and Grays Farm Clinics. In collaboration with the Caribbean Council for the Blind, and trained Refractionists, the screening and distribution of affordable eyewear will move into a new phase of operations.

My Government will also move to further improve the National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for persons with Disabilities during this session. In addition, efforts will be advance to:

- Develop a National Policy for Persons with Disabilities;
- Establish a National Disability Board/Council – comprising of representatives, social partners, stakeholders and all other interest groups which will function as liaison with Government and Society;
- Establish a National Register of disabled persons by nature of disability from birth;

- Create and determine training needs and programmes for Vocational Training of persons with disabilities and encourage entrepreneurial skills and employment of trained persons; and
- Formulate a National Education Drive through media, schools, and communities for the ratification of the convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The operations of the Mount St. John Medical Centre, which is our primary healthcare facility will be reviewed with the aim of better serving the public particularly the Casualty Department.

My Government will also partner with international and regional tertiary institutions to provide specialized training for nurses at the institution and our returning doctors from the Republic of Cuba and the University of the West Indies.

Madame President and Members of the Senate:

Madame Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives:

The security of our nation is paramount to the new society my Government aims to create in our nation. Every Antiguan and Barbudan citizen and resident deserves to feel safe in their homes, businesses and at public functions.

Throughout this Parliamentary Year, my Government pledges to spare no effort in providing the agencies with the most modern and technologically advanced crime-fighting equipment.

My Government wishes to place on record its commendation of the men and women of our security forces – The Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda; the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force; and the Office of National Drug Control and Money Laundering Policy, for their sterling efforts in fighting crime.

It is my Government's pledge to provide the men and women of the security forces not only with modern equipment but with the latest in crime fighting techniques. Scholarships and training will be provided on a regular basis.

My Government will also conduct a comprehensive review of legislation governing juveniles as part of OECS/USAID Juvenile Justice Reform project. Consultants have started work regionally and there is expected to be more harmonization and uniformity in this area.

The Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education (ABICE) will also benefit from this project with the provision of an array of tools and equipment to aid in the delivery of courses.

Despite the fiscal downturn of the country, my Government has been very committed to the Security Forces in providing the necessary resources that would allow them to be effective in the performance of their duties.

My Government expresses its profound gratitude to the governments of Canada, The People's Republic of China, United Kingdom, and United States who have considerably contributed to the security forces' development in providing training, tertiary level education, logistical support, and financial assistance.

These partnerships are important to my Government especially in light of the security architecture of the region where it is vulnerable to transnational crimes such as narcotics trafficking and terrorism. As such, my Government recognizes the value that can be derived in forging strong regional and international partnerships to address the various security challenges that are common to Antigua and Barbuda and its many overseas partners.

As it relates to the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force, my Government will continue to support and provide the necessary resources that are needed to further build the capacity of Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force to address the security threats confronting the nation currently and into the future. In adopting a proactive approach, my Government, in 2014 will seek to achieve the following among others:

- Continuing to provide the necessary resources to the ABDF so it can be effective in supporting the Government's crime fighting strategy especially as it relates to the support that the military is providing to the Police and other security bodies in the area of joint patrols, intelligence, and expertise;

- Increasing the Force's manpower to ensure that its goals and objectives are materialized; and
- Continuing the expansion of the National Cadet Corps into the various secondary schools as one of the strategy to inculcate good behaviour in our youths which could lead to a reduction in Youth Violence.

The Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda will continue to focus its resources on the safety of all who live in and visit Antigua and Barbuda through Community Base Policing, Intelligence Led Policing, Patrol and Visibility, Traffic Management, Risk Managing of Human Resources and fire Prevention Education. This has proven so far to produce a safer Antigua and Barbuda.

During 2014, the force will continue to build on its successes in an effort to sustain and to concretize achievements. In order to take back the streets from the criminals, the police cannot do it alone therefore they must join forces with the communities and all other stake holders in an effort to be successful. Community Based Policing has proven to be the way forward.

The Immigration Department, which is an integral part of the nation's security feature, has signed off on documents making it possible for the Government of Antigua and Barbuda to acquire a new Border Management System to be used by the Department.

Canadian Bank Note (CBN) is the company who will be designing and supplying the new system.

This is a milestone for the Immigration Department and the start of a new era, which will solve most of the present challenges such as the antiquated visa application system and the issuing of work permit and residency cards. E-visa and e-passport capabilities will also be a part of the new border management system.

In addition, through strict access control, the system is designed to mitigate against the potential for internal fraud and will provide the Government of Antigua and Barbuda the unique opportunity to invest in the modernization of the country's border infrastructure that will provide long term value to the government, citizens and travellers.

As part of my Government's efforts to build a new society, the transformation of the public sector is vital. Efforts will be made in the New Year to move forward the recommendations for the transformation of the sector to better serve Antiguan and Barbudans.

The structure of Community Sports organisations, national festivals including carnival and the implementation of a culture policy will also form part of transformation efforts. The roles of the recently appointed Culture Ambassadors will be reviewed to maximize their expertise and augment their community service portfolios.

Madame President and Members of the Senate:

Madame Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives:

Over the past ten years, my Government commitment to its legislative agenda has been remarkably steadfast. It will continue apace as we seek to lay the legislative framework for a new society of growth and opportunity.

In this new Parliamentary Year, among other things, my Government will seek to do the following:

1. Frustrated over the delay by the United States in implementing the 2004 WTO decision following our success in the US/Antigua and Barbuda dispute over remote or Internet gaming, my Government will seek to implement the arbitration panel's 2007 decision that Antigua and Barbuda should have recourse to the suspension of US intellectual property interests under the TRIPS agreement in order to get value out of the sanctions awarded. Our once-flourishing gaming industry has been ruined by US laws prohibiting and criminalizing the provision of remote gaming services from Antigua and Barbuda to consumers in the United States which laws have been held to be in violation of International law. Accordingly, necessary amendments will be made to the Copyrights Act, the Trade Marks Act, and the Patents Act to invoke the WTO-approved sanctions by removing any protection which US intellectual property may have in Antigua and Barbuda.
2. The Immigration and Passport Act is to be repealed and replaced by a similarly-named Act which will comprehensively address entry and

residency requirements for European service providers, citizens of CARICOM States as informed by the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, and OECS Member States as informed by the Revised Treaty of Basseterre. Additionally, the administration of the Immigration Department will be simplified to allow for fast-track processing, particularly of non-citizens with residential properties or business interests in the State. Importantly, freedom of movement within the OECS must be our goal as we seek to deepen the integration movement with our small neighbouring states.

3. A review of the provisions of the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Code conducted by the National Labour Board comprising equal representatives from government, employers, and employees has recommended certain amendments, and my Government is committed to making the necessary changes where these allow for a more equitable balance of rights and obligations between employers and employees. As a necessary corollary, an Occupational Safety and Health Act will be proposed to ensure safe working conditions in all fields of human endeavour across the length and breadth of the country.
4. The Audit Department will be strengthened with the introduction of an Audit Act, which will enumerate the important independent functions of the Director of Audit, compliment the Finance Administration Act of 2006 in its implementation, and serve to strengthen the role of the Public Accounts Committee in ensuring that public funds are properly accounted for and spent.

5. Antigua and Barbuda acceded to and ratified the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in 1992, and the Convention for the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage in 2013, but is yet to provide legal protection for the control, protection, and management of our historical cultural sites. My Government intends introducing legislation establishing a central agency for the protection of our heritage tourism development and to provide clear guidelines and policy for the proper management of these natural resources.
6. The de-criminalization of defamation has become a *Cri de Coeur* of the Press – international, regional, and local. A Bill will shortly be piloted to amend our defamation laws accordingly, but it is hoped that this measure will not give licence to our electronic, voice, and print media to “talk as they like”, but instead that responsible and objective journalism will be the order of the day towards building not just a society, but a just society.
7. Deviant behaviour is on the rise, and there is need for a firm hand to battle the arsenal and intentions of criminal minds. My Government will be embarking on a series of criminal law reform measures starting with the Proceeds of Crime Bill, which will allow for civil forfeiture even in the absence of a criminal conviction, but subject to claims from innocent third parties. The Police Act, the Sexual Offences Act, and the Evidence Act, to name a few, will be amended to increase prosecutorial powers and offer sufficient protection to the innocent victims of crime.
8. In my Government's first year of the first term in office, Parliament passed the Prevention of Corruption Act, 2004. Recent court decisions tend to suggest that proving corruption at common law is a very high bar, and

consequently the issue of corruption needs legislative intervention. My Government is therefore committed to examining this issue with a view to introducing necessary amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act, 2004 with a view to addressing its deficiencies.

9. Antigua and Barbuda has been a trailblazer in Caribbean intergration. My Government's record in welcoming and granting our brothers and sisters from across the region full citizenship status is unmatched. My Government believes that the Caribbean Court of Justice CCJ is an integral part of the integration process and therefore it is my Government's intention to pass the necessary law which would allow for enforcement of CCJ judgments and Orders arising out of litigation involving the interpretation and enforcement of obligations under the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramus. Antigua and Barbuda would be the first, and that would be historical and once again blazing the integration path.

Madame President and Members of the Senate:

Madame Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives:

With steady hands at the wheel, unified determination, good intentions and hope for a brighter tomorrow for every Antiguan and Barbudan, resident and friends, my Government has battled the most severe economic storm in the history of the world and Antigua and Barbuda.

My Government's has proven by its actions that Antigua and Barbuda is in safe hands. Now more than ever, as our nation is maneuvering through the last leg of the stormy seas, with my Government as the captain of the ship

and the nation as its stewards, Antigua and Barbuda shall arrive at a new destination – a new society of growth and opportunity.

And so, as I thank you for extending to me the courtesy of your time and patience in spending these your precious minutes with me, permit me, in conclusion, to request you to join with me in thanking Almighty God for all that he has purposed my Government to undertake on behalf of the people of Antigua and Barbuda.

My Government assures you of its commitment to walk the vision of Antigua and Barbuda, the New Society, pledged as we are, to continue on the road to sustainable development, growth and prosperity for all as my Government continues to govern in 2014.

I pray God's Blessings on you the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, that your actions will be guided by Him who gives us strength and courage to do what is right by the Almighty for and in the interest of our beloved country and people.

I pray that God will continuously bless each and every one of you.

Madam President of the Senate, Honourable Senators, Madam Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives, I pray God's blessing upon your counsels.

I thank you.

