



**An Address by**

**the Hon. David A.C. Simmons, Q.C., M.P.,  
Attorney General of Barbados,**

**to the Opening Session of**

**the Control Coordination Mechanism Task Force**

**Meetings to review the Barbados Plan of Action**

**Grand Barbados Hotel, Barbados  
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Let me extend a very warm welcome to all delegates to this very important Task Force Meeting of the Caribbean Drug Control Coordination Mechanism (C.C.M.) on behalf of the Government and people of Barbados. It is good to see so many old friends and colleagues of the region and the international community represented here. It is also very fitting that this Meeting should take place in Barbados where the Plan of Action for Drug Control Coordination and Cooperation in the Caribbean had its genesis.

You may recall that that Plan of Action (now universally known as "the Barbados Plan of Action") was the result of an initiative begun by the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Rt. Hon. Owen Arthur, during a meeting in September 1995 with the then Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. John Major.

The European Union speedily acted upon the efforts of Mr. Major and President Chirac and, through the instrumentality of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), a meeting was convened here in Barbados between May 15 and 17, 1996 to develop the Barbados Plan of Action. All Caribbean countries were represented as well as the United Kingdom, the U.S.A., the European Union, specialised agencies within the U.N. system, the CARICOM and Commonwealth Secretariats, Interpol, the World Customs Organisation, the O.A.S., numerous regional bodies and non-governmental organisations.

What emerged from our discussions was a Plan of Action described by the present Executive Director of UNDCP, Pino Arlacchi as "the first concrete drug effort anywhere in the world to propose a truly regional solution which is both balanced and integrated." I think that we should all be proud of the outcomes of our work in May 1996.

Through the financial and political generosity of the European Union the process of implementation of the Plan of Action is underway and it is my personal assessment that real and substantial progress has been achieved in the past four years.

We in the Caribbean are giving real effect to the mandate of the 1988 VIENNA CONVENTION against the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in full recognition of our belief that action against the world phenomenon of illicit narcotic drugs is a common and shared responsibility.

The security of all of our States demands national, regional and international responses to the world phenomenon if legitimate society is not to be destroyed.

In 1992, the WEST INDIAN COMMISSION headed by Sir Shridath Ramphal presented a report sub-titled **TIME FOR ACTION** to the Heads of Government of the Caribbean region. The Commission recognised the size of the regional problem of drug trafficking and drug abuse in these words:

*“We believe that the drug problem in our region has to be acknowledged and confronted for the monstrous evil and pernicious cancer that it is.....Nothing poses a greater threat to civil society in CARICOM countries than the drug problem; and nothing exemplifies the powerlessness of regional Governments more. That is the magnitude of the danger that drug abuse and drug trafficking hold for our community. It is a many-layered danger.”*

The Barbados Plan of Action of 1996 is the positive multinational response to the problem so eloquently described by the WEST INDIAN COMMISSION. For as much as we endeavour nationally and regionally to counter the trade in narcotics, we remain convinced, as I indicated earlier that countries of the NORTH whose populations provide the consumer markets for illegal drugs have an equal responsibility to us in the Caribbean and themselves to assist in the eradication of the scourge of illegal drugs and its multitudinous attendant evils. There is a coincidence of mutual interests.

The agenda for the Meeting over the next three days properly reviews and evaluates progress made in the implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action. I said that real and substantial progress has been made. It is appropriate and timely that we should now condescend upon a detailed examination of the specific elements and recommendations of the Plan during this Meeting.

As early as December 1996, the Heads of Government of CARICOM gave their total political commitment to the Plan of Action by establishing an Inter-Governmental Task Force on Drugs (IGTF) charged with the responsibility of formulating an integrated regional counter-narcotics policy covering all aspects of the drug trade. The IGTF has been meeting regularly and provides policy direction to the countries of the region.

Moreover, we now have a regional Coordinator based at the CARICOM Secretariat in Georgetown with executive authority to monitor and facilitate the implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action in Member States.

In addition, the several studies commissioned by the European Union to chart the way forward in the implementation of the Plan of Action were delivered to Heads of Governments in 1998 and are being acted upon.

I am sure that the Regional Coordinator will present a matrix of actions taken by Member States in pursuance of the Plan of Action and I trust that, after due consideration, delegates will agree that my own personal assessment of real and substantial progress is not an overstatement.

Indeed, I go further. Recent statistical evidence published by UNDCP indicates that in the last two years there has been a significant decline in drug trafficking within the region. This decline, however, must not be a reason for complacency on the part of the region or our international partners. Rather, it must be the stimulus for increased cooperation and concerted, systematic action.

I must warn, however, that there are certain disturbing trends which have emerged within the Caribbean region in the last two years and which call for careful study and studied response.

First, from our own experiences as Ministers responsible for Law and Order, we have compelling evidence leading to the conclusion that the vast majority of serious crime in the region is drug-related. And even though many developed countries are experiencing similar trends there can be no comfort in this phenomenon. I hope that during your deliberations you will pay regard to this development and, possibly, consider strategies to deal with it or, at least, agree that it is a matter for urgent evaluation and response. For much of this crime is of a violent nature and is increasing the fear of crime among our peoples.

The second disturbing feature of the contemporary Caribbean scene is the increased traffic in illegal firearms. Admittedly, this was not a matter in the 1996 Barbados Plan of Action but there is no doubt that the threat posed by this traffic to our societies is compounded by its linkage to the illicit traffic in drugs.

I am pleased that, within this Hemisphere, a Convention has been concluded establishing an international response against the illicit manufacture and traffic in arms, explosives and similar materials. Barbados is currently taking the necessary consultative steps to ensure that this year we sign the Inter-American Convention and I urge all CARICOM States to treat the signature and ratification of this Convention as a matter of the highest priority.

Similarly, in regard to corruption of public officials, the drugs trade has been having an insidious effect. This too, is a disconcerting trend and it behooves us not only to improve national anti-corruption strategies but also to sign and ratify the Hemispheric Convention against Corruption. Barbados has every intention of signing the Inter-American Convention this year.

I wish, finally, to turn to the matter of Money Laundering. Many of our States in the region are being confronted by two threats; the one from the machinations of transnational organised criminals who seek to penetrate our financial systems; the other from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This organisation, within the last two years, has been pursuing initiatives whose effects are to undermine the vital economic interests of some of our countries.

By the publication of a Report "Harmful Tax Competition – An Emerging Global Issue", the OECD is unilaterally seeking to denigrate several of our States which have legitimately and strategically sought to re-order our economies by the development of an international financial services sector.

I wish to repeat what I said on this matter at the U.N. Special Session Drugs in June 1998:

*It seems that the developed world has considered penalising those of our countries which have diversified our economies to promote offshore financial services as legitimate international business.....The countries of the Caribbean which promote such business all appreciate and understand that our jurisdictions must gain and maintain reputations as centres of clean business.....The opening of markets and the liberalisation of trade will bring new challenges. The appropriate response is not to seek to outlaw offshore financial business but, rather, to strengthen its regulation.*

*For all of us the political will is strong to wage war against narco-trafficking and money laundering. But financial and technical resources are weak. The more affluent countries of the North --especially those whose major cities are in fact centres for large-scale money laundering – can usefully support the efforts of developing countries by the provision of financial, technical and technological assistance and the provision of increased opportunities for training.”*

We in Barbados are especially disappointed in the attitude and approach of the OECD for several reasons.

(i) The OECD has no standing in International Law and its published actions have no legitimacy in law.

(ii) The Government of Barbados does not accept that the OECD has any lawful authority to seek to cause the Government of Barbados – or indeed any other Government – to so order its taxation regime as to amount to an attempt to fetter the supremacy of Parliament. Taxation policy is essentially a matter within the sovereign authority of a Parliament.

(iii) The Government of Barbados is not a member of the OECD and is therefore not bound by its Charter or other Instruments.

(iv) Since 1992, the Government of Barbados has been an active and leading member of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) which is an organisation affiliated to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and whose membership includes States of the OECD. The CFATF has been highly commended for the quality and extent of this work in the Caribbean and has assisted most of our countries, through its several procedures, in strengthening our legislative, and regulatory framework to provide effective counter-measures to money laundering.

I cannot believe that the OECD and FATF are sending an implied signal of dissatisfaction with the work of CFATF.

(v) Prior to the publication of its Report, the OECD chose not to engage in meaningful consultations with our countries and we believe that such conduct was unnecessarily high-handed.

Having indicated some of Barbados' concerns about the approach of the OECD, let me make it abundantly clear that the Government of Barbados as a serious and responsible member of the international community committed to the elimination of money laundering, has been cooperating with the OECD. And we will continue to cooperate.

However, we welcome the recent indication of the willingness of the OECD to engage constructively with small States on tax competition issues and we would encourage the development of effective multilateral discussion.

Therefore, Barbados is entirely supportive of the initiative of the United Nations to establish an Offshore Forum under its authority and we were pleased to participate in the first meeting held in the Cayman Islands at the end of March this year.

I also take this opportunity to thank the regional office of the UNDCP for the assistance which it has rendered to the Government of Barbados in preparing for the establishment of a Financial Investigations Unit during this year.

I close by expressing the hope that your discussions over the next three days during which you will measure the progress made in implementing the Barbados Plan of Action, will be stimulating and rewarding. Three days ought properly to afford you some opportunity to sample the social and cultural attributes of our Island and I trust that you will take a little time to get an appreciation of what Barbados has to offer.

In that spirit, I am delighted to extend an official invitation to each of you to join me at a reception tomorrow evening at 7.00p.m. at Tyrol Cot, one of our heritage properties, and the home of two late Prime Ministers: Sir Grantley Adams, the first and only Prime Minister of the Federation of the West Indies and his son "Tom", the second Prime Minister of Barbados.