



Dr. The Honorable W. Baldwin Spencer

Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda

New Year Message 2013

“Realizing Hope – Committed to the Task”

31st December 2012

**My Fellow Antiguan and Barbudans;
Residents and Friends of Antigua and Barbuda:**

As we stand at the portal of a New Year, we are reminded that it signals a new start and new hope for a better Antigua and Barbuda.

As a nation, we are thankful to Almighty God for his blessings throughout 2012 and for giving us the opportunity to usher in a New Year.

Unfortunately, there are some members of our Antigua and Barbuda family, who are no longer with us this year. To their families, it is my hope that the memories you shared, will give you comfort.

I wish to also offer my best wishes and prayers and that of the government, for a speedy return to good health, to all those who are warded in hospitals or at home including the Hon. Minister of Education Dr. Jacqui Quinn-Leandro.

To those who care for our loved ones in hospitals and nursing homes, the government expresses its gratitude for your service. Your unselfish dedication to giving back to the nation of Antigua and Barbuda deserves all of our commendation.

Words of gratitude are also expressed to the men and women of our security forces, public servants, members of non-governmental

organizations, service clubs and the church for your national effort in doing good for Antigua and Barbuda.

I wish to also commend those ambassadors who have worked tirelessly to deliver for Antigua and Barbuda in significant ways throughout the past year. Particularly, our overseas Permanent Representatives and non-resident Ambassadors are to be highly applauded for their dedication.

Expressions of gratitude are also extended to my Cabinet Colleagues and other members of parliament, senators and parliamentary secretaries for their support throughout 2012 and for remaining committed and staying the course in advancing the government's *People First* agenda.

Throughout this New Year, it is my hope that we will all recommit to redoubling our efforts to continue to serve the people.

My Fellow Antiguan and Barbudans;

Residents and Friends of Antigua and Barbuda:

American Civil Rights Leader Martin Luther King Jr. once said “We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.”

As the warm rays of sunshine emerge over the lush, green hills and valleys of Antigua and Barbuda for the first time in 2013, our homes

and our hearts are filled with new hope and flooded with fresh expectations.

This new dawn is ours to grasp. This New Year is ours to embrace.

The first day of the New Year should serve to reinvigorate our minds, refresh our spirit, and renew our resolve, despite the challenges of the past year.

The New Year also represents a clean slate on which to build on the achievements of the past, and a new page on which to register new personal and collective gains for our country and our people.

For Antigua and Barbuda and every citizen and resident, 2012 was a year of both challenges and achievements.

We grappled with the lingering effects of a global recession which continues to suppress economic activity at every level.

The maturity, responsibility, resoluteness and creativity of the Antiguan and Barbudan people in the face of challenges throughout 2012, has been commendable. As a Government, you, the people, make us proud to be your leaders. Your industry and resilience provide us with inspiration to continue working to overcome the many challenges.

With your support, your Government is, in fact, confronting the severe challenges with vision, boldness and determination.

Three years ago, we commenced the process of reshaping our nation – setting it on a firm foundation. A fiscal consolidation programme that focused on aligning our revenues and expenditures was designed.

As this consolidation process unfolded, financial and technical assistance were secured from international, regional and bilateral sources to support our fiscal reform efforts.

Though it has not been easy, the fiscal consolidation and debt restructuring initiatives have yielded some success. The country's debt service obligations have decreased significantly and we are firmly on the path to fiscal sustainability.

In charting a deliberate new course towards national development and prosperity, the government has built on the achievements that we attained during last year. For let us make no mistake about it, gradual and important gains have been made in 2012.

The government's home-grown National Economic and Social Transformation (NEST) Plan, has enabled us to reclaim the trust of every right thinking individual of this country in government and its institutions; our relationships with development partners are being strengthened; we have been rebranded as a responsible member of

the community of nations; and our public sector transformation efforts have commenced yielding positive results.

The New Year, however, and the continued challenges faced by the international community and our interrelatedness, demand that we should do more – that we need to do more if we are to maintain our gains and continue our nation on a path of sustainable development.

We are required to continue to strengthen our social safety nets, stimulate economic activity and address the needs of our retirees through the reform of our pension system.

If we are to continue on this path, our nation will be ensured of significant and sustained growth in our economy.

It is your government's belief that the operationalisation of the Citizen by Investment Programme will result in significant gains for Antigua and Barbuda and its people.

It is therefore the intention of your government to bring into effect a Citizenship by Investment Programme by the end of the first quarter of 2013.

Having carried out some eighteen months of examination of the pros and cons, the merits and possible demerits of introducing such a programme, we have come to the inescapable conclusion that the Citizenship by Investment Programme will assist in driving economic growth, create meaningful jobs, generate much needed revenue to

assist in maintaining and enhancing our social programme, improve our infrastructure, educate and train the population, provide descent and improved healthcare and promote healthy lifestyles through sports, recreation and the pursuit and advancement of our cultural heritage.

I am fully conscious of some of the concerns that have been expressed, but I am equally or even more convinced that all the necessary mechanisms and safeguards can and will be put in place to allay any fears and concerns there might be.

In other words, all the requisite precautions and due diligence exercises will be undertaken to protect the integrity and viability of the programme and the good name of Antigua and Barbuda.

Already, we are foreseeing positive results from the implementation of this programme and that it will redound to the benefit of the people of Antigua and Barbuda. Your humble servant is convinced of this.

Further economic activity will also be generated in the first quarter of the New Year with the commencement of construction of the Bau Panell Systems Antigua Limited Manufacturing plant. This project, which government owns 25% will result in over 80 persons being employed during the first phase of the plant construction. During

the construction phase of Bau Panell homes around Antigua and Barbuda, over five hundred jobs will be created.

I am fully confident that with the expertise that Bau Panel brings in the construction of homes around the world, that this project will be a major success for Antigua and Barbuda.

The commencement of construction of the State Insurance Office Complex on Upper St. Mary's Street and the Office Complex for the Antigua and Barbuda Department of Merchant Shipping early in the New Year are also expected to generate employment and boost the vital construction industry.

I am also pleased to announce that plans are in the final stages in securing funding for the resumption of construction work and the operationalization of the SunShine Hub Parking Facility on Independence Avenue.

Construction will also commence in the first quarter of 2013 on a new secondary school in Five Islands and the Cancer Centre of the OECS at Mount St. John.

In addition, the Construct Antigua Barbuda Initiative, which had a slow start in early 2012 with scores of Antiguan and Barbudans availing themselves of the benefits under this programme, will be

accelerated in 2013 and consideration is being given to expanding the programme to include construction of businesses.

The Antigua and Barbuda Sales Tax reduction announced by government during the yuletide season, from all reports, also had a positive impact on consumers and businesses. During 2013, government will devise similar arrangements to bring relief and generate growth in businesses.

As government seeks to provide support in growth generation, it is incumbent on all to ensure that you meet your obligations to government on a timely basis as we work together in the interest of the people.

I am fully convinced that these initiatives and others supported by government will result in steady growth of the Antigua and Barbuda economy in 2013.

My Fellow Antiguan and Barbudans;

Residents and Friends of Antigua and Barbuda:

The New Year also ushers in for Antigua and Barbuda a period of celebration of our friendship with the People and Government of the People's Republic of China.

On January 1, our countries celebrate 30 years of excellent diplomatic relations.

Over those thirty years, our two nations have worked harmoniously on a number of development projects, including sports, science and technology, culture, education, healthcare and infrastructural development which have lessened the impact of a global economy in recession.

Antigua and Barbuda attaches great importance to the continued development of relations with the government of the People's Republic of China and it is my belief that our continued cooperation would enrich the mutually beneficial relations and strengthen the ties between our governments and peoples.

I am pleased to announce that the construction of the New Airport Terminal at the V.C. Bird International Airport with funding from the People's Republic of China is progressing at a steady pace and on schedule.

The opportunity has also presented itself for us to embark upon the expansion of works on the existing plan for the airport terminal project to better serve the needs of the traveling public and stakeholders.

On behalf of the Government and People of Antigua and Barbuda I congratulate the People's Republic of China on this auspicious

occasion and look forward to continued cooperation based on mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit.

My Fellow Antiguan and Barbudans;

Residents and Friends of Antigua and Barbuda:

Unfortunately, at the dawning of the New Year we are faced with the challenge of addressing the recent spate of crimes within our nation.

Of particular concern to the government and I am sure to the citizens and residents of this country is the increase in gun related crimes and involvement of law enforcement personnel in crimes.

With these recent developments, and with security being uppermost on the government's agenda, it is our pledge to redouble our efforts to strengthen the capabilities of our law enforcement bodies.

I fully endorse the efforts of the Honourable Minister of National Security to look at ways to improve the Crime Fighting Strategic Plan of the police to prevent and solve gun related crimes. I await the Minister's presentation to the Cabinet on his meeting with the hierarchy of the security forces and the outcome of the investigation.

It is also the government's intention to give serious consideration to introducing regular polygraph testing of officers within the Royal

Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda and ultimately all members of the country's security forces.

I also urge citizens and residents to not only do all within your power to legally protect yourselves and property, but provide assistance to the law enforcement personnel in their efforts to solve crimes.

In addition, as part of efforts to improve on the Prevention of Crime and Violence Action Plan, the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act will be brought to parliament early in the New Year.

The Act will provide for certain criminal convictions to be expunged after a defined rehabilitation period from the date of the conviction. This means that ex-offenders will not be required to disclose such convictions when applying for employment, citizenship or taking out insurance policies, nor will they be taken into account in respect of subsequent criminal proceedings. However, if additional convictions are obtained before the rehabilitation period has elapsed, these will extend that period.

My Fellow Antiguan and Barbudans;

Residents and Friends of Antigua and Barbuda:

The government remains committed to transforming Antigua and Barbuda.

A significant component of transforming our nation is ensuring that our education system meets international standards.

The Government therefore takes seriously its responsibility to ensure that no child is left behind at the elementary, primary, and secondary stages, and that tertiary and vocational opportunities are universally accessible.

In the New Year, the Government will continue to collaborate with our international partners in securing scholarships for our young people. The Government places on record its appreciation to the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Cuba, the Republic of Serbia, the Russian Federation, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Kingdom of Morocco, Brazil, India, Greece and Malaysia for supporting the government's education agenda.

In mid-January, the Government will fully activate the e-Education Computer Tablets and e-Education Connectivity component of the Government Assisted Technology Endeavour (GATE).

Under this component, thousands of secondary school students both public and private schools will begin receiving a modern, 4G LTE enabled computer tablet and 4G LTE broadband Internet connectivity that will transform student learning and increase student-teacher engagement.

I am very pleased that this component of GATE will allow students and their families to leverage on the expanding world of incredibly powerful education-centric and subject-specific applications that are available via these computers.

Congratulations to the 5th formers at the St. Mary's Secondary School, the Antigua Girls' High School, the Island Academy and St. Joseph's Academy for being the first to be allocated this revolutionary new technology.

This commitment on the part of the Government represents yet another manifestation of our untiring efforts at ensuring that we continue to produce competitive citizens that are part of our ever strengthening information-enabled, globally-connected, knowledge-based society.

In the coming weeks, another integral part of GATE will be fully operational. The ICT Cadet Programme will provide two hundred and fifty persons with technical, hands-on ICT training in four distinct blocks: 1) New Media, 2) Computer Diagnostics, Repairs and Upgrades, 3) Support for Community Projects, and 4) the Connect Antigua and Barbuda Initiative.

This cadet programme, which will train over 2500 persons over a five-year period, will provide workplace experiences to assist persons to effectively use their training in a professional environment. Indeed, this cadet programme will place these cadets on a pathway to self-entrepreneurship.

My Fellow Antiguan and Barbudans;

Residents and Friends of Antigua and Barbuda:

The Government is cognizant of the negative impact of the economic crisis on the quality of life for several of our citizens. We recognise the severe impact on families, individuals and communities, and we are determined to protect them from the consequences of this deep recession by delivering on our promise to maintain social programmes and reduce poverty.

With technical and financial assistance from the World Bank the government is designing a mechanism that offers immediate but temporary economic relief to a disadvantaged cohort of our population. In particular, some 1,200 low-income unemployed persons between the ages 17 and 50 will benefit from the programme.

The programme has two complementary components - a training component and a temporary employment component. It will include activities that enhance their skills through vocational and life-skills

training and provide an allowance as a form of income support.

The overall objective of these interventions is to increase employment and incomes, remove people from hardship and at the same time helping them to maintain a dignified life. The programme will run for three years.

The temporary employment will provide income support to the less experienced low-income unemployed through a temporary job plus a life-skills training module. Beneficiaries will be identified and selected by the Labour Department in the Ministry of National Security and Labour through the *One Stop Job Centre* on the basis of criteria to evaluate the eligibility of the applicants.

This intervention must not only be viewed as an element of crisis response and recovery but rather one which is fundamental to our economic and social development transformation strategies designed to strengthen resilience to secure growth and sustainability.

The global crisis has vehemently shown that social protection policies are a critical element of national economic and social policies at all stages of development. The Government is therefore satisfied that this programme is consistent with the *Social Protection Floor Initiative* promoted by the UN agencies, IMF, the World Bank and several other development partners in the wake of the global crisis.

The Initiative requires governments to put the people first in economic policies, crisis management and in the development policy agenda.

The government pledges to adhere to the principles of the Initiative by providing societal insurance against perpetuating poverty and will continue to design tools to mitigate and overcome the effects of the economic crisis as well as to strengthen economic resilience.

It is also my government's intention in the New Year to address the increasing number of single parents within the society.

While we commend the Church for its efforts in addressing the concerns of families, government is cognizant of the need to put in place mechanisms to address the challenges of single parents and create opportunities for their development and that of their children.

To this end, during the first quarter of 2013, government will move to conduct a comprehensive assessment of single parents in Antigua and Barbuda with the aim of documenting their circumstances with the view of developing initiatives to setting them on a secure path and future.

Early in the New Year, the Government will also complete the designing of a business development programme targeted at single mothers and youth. The Enterprise Achievement Challenge

(EACH), is intended to create employment opportunities for participants and will empower single mothers and the youth in our communities. The focus of this initiative will be skills-based enterprises, with the participants being attached to existing businesses as apprentices

The programme will start with the skills-based enterprises with emphasis on clothes-making, shoe and leather repairs, locksmithing, and yacht and sailboat repairs. In addition to being trained by masters in these areas, the participants will be instructed in basic contracts, marketing, money management for business purposes, and customer relations. Successful applicants to the EACH initiative will receive a stipend for the time they are participating in the programme.

It is also government's intention in the New Year to further address the concerns of the physically challenged in our society. Conventions protecting the rights of the disabled and laws governing their welfare will be given top priority during the current Parliamentary Year.

My Fellow Antiguan and Barbudans;

Residents and Friends of Antigua and Barbuda:

During the government's presentation of the Budget Statement, we announced that 2013 has been declared the **Year of Youth Development**. Over the next 12 months, the Government will intensify its engagement with the youths of this nation to increase their ability to actively impact the policy making process and contribute to economic and social development in Antigua and Barbuda. Since taking office in 2004, this Administration has been committed to developing the youth of this nation.

A major plank of this platform has been youth development focused on empowerment through increased access to tertiary education. The UPP Government has secured scholarships for hundreds of our young people to study in various parts of the world. This Administration also created a special fund that affords students who cannot access traditional sources of financing an opportunity to pay for their tertiary education.

Empowerment through education is perhaps the most effective means of developing our youths and equipping them to one day direct the course that Antigua and Barbuda will follow.

We are excited about 2013 as there are a number of new and exciting interventions that will benefit the youths. These interventions will cover various sectors of the economy and will provide training and

opportunities for our youths to engage in entrepreneurship programmes as well as community development initiatives.

It is my belief that the policies and programmes pursued by the Government must promote economic growth to boost our wellbeing today and secure a legacy of sound and sustainable development for future generations.

With respect to our future generations, the government believes that the men and women who will live that future must be given an opportunity to influence the policies and programmes that will be implemented today.

To facilitate this, the Government will convene a Youth Symposium. This Youth Symposium will bring together young people between the ages of 15 and 25 years to review and critique the proposed strategies for development.

In keeping with our declaration that 2013 is the Year of Youth Development, the Government will make this Youth Symposium, which will take place in the first half of 2013, the launch pad for sustained engagement with our young people.

We will provide opportunities for our youths to develop projects that will benefit their communities. We will assist our youths to establish and maintain a formal youth executive that would meet and represent

the interests of our young people when the Government holds consultations with stakeholders.

As part of the youth-centred programmes for 2013, the government will implement the following:

1. Youth PATH – Youth Poverty Alleviation through Tourism and Heritage; which is a UNESCO based Caribbean initiative that is intended to train young people in rural communities in the development and documentation of cultural and natural heritage sites;
2. Youth Entrepreneurs in Tourism Initiative (YETI); which is designed to provide young people with opportunities to pursue entrepreneurship in the tourism sector;
3. The Corporate Tourism Internship Mentoring Programme; which is a ten-week mentoring course which offers an interactive approach to learning about the tourism industry;
4. The National Youth Farm Project; which will be an 100 acre farm producing vegetables, tree crops and small ruminants like sheep and goats. Technical and Financial assistance will come from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO); and
5. The Prime Minister’s Youth Award for Social Enhancement; which is designed to recognize young people for their contribution to the social wellbeing of others.

The government's Year of Youth Development is not to be viewed as a twelve month programme which ends on the last day of 2013. Instead, it represents the launch of a series of programmes and the expansion of others that will ensure our youths remain positively engaged in every aspect of the social and economic fabric of society.

Parallel with the Year of Youth Development is the Ministry of Sports Year of Sports Events, which will be held under the theme "Keep Moving."

Government views the Year of Sports Events as a means to sensitize the public to the dangers of non-communicable diseases such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension and heart disease which can be tackled through an increase in the level of physical fitness through sports and recreation.

Some of the activities for the Year of Sports Events will include a Parliamentarians relay, senior games, special needs games and a sports festival.

My Fellow Antiguan and Barbudans;

Residents and Friends of Antigua and Barbuda:

The New Year must also be a Year of Hope for those individuals who have made significant contributions to the development of our nation.

The government recognizes that it has a responsibility to not only honour those who have worked tirelessly to build this nation, but to ensure that they live comfortable lives.

Unfortunately, the UPP administration inherited a Social Security Scheme which was grossly mismanaged and raped and left with a debt of over \$500 million dollars by the previous administration.

The UPP Government has made every effort to ensure the survival of the Scheme, however reality has caught up with us. The Social Security Scheme must be placed on a path of stabilization or it will collapse. Government must act now and place the Scheme on a path to sustainability and stability.

The Government is therefore giving serious consideration to the recommendations from the reviews conducted by the Board of Directors and Management of Social Security and the consultant Actuary.

The Primary reforms being considered by government for implementation include:

1. Increasing the contribution rate by 2%, to take the total contribution to 10% from the present level of 8%. The most equitable distribution would be to increase the contributions made by both the employer and employee by 1% each to 6% in the case of employers and to 4% in the case of employees.
2. Increasing the insurable income from the present level of \$4,500 monthly to \$6,500 monthly.
3. Increasing the pensionable age to 65 years from the current level of 60 years. What is yet to be determined is how soon to transition the change, as it could be over a period of either 5 years or 10 years. It should be noted that persons who have less than 5-years before attaining the existing pensionable age would have the option to proceed on early retirement, though at a reduced pension.
4. Ensuring that all self-employed persons are required to register and contribute to Social Security through implementation of the amendment passed in 2001; and
5. Increasing the powers of the Director and Social Security Inspectors to enforce the provisions of the act, particularly as it relates to deducting and remitting contributions to Social Security as stipulated by law.

I wish to reiterate, my government is committed to providing for those who have paid their dues, and contributed to the development of Antigua and Barbuda. We will continue to make our regular contributions to the Scheme and will continue the trend of NOT Borrowing from the Scheme – This is our commitment – it is our policy.

My Fellow Antiguan and Barbudans;

Residents and Friends of Antigua and Barbuda:

The Government believes that a significant aspect of realizing our hope for a sustainable future is to ensure that public sector and social sector modernization remains at the pinnacle of our goals.

With this in mind, I have decided on a number of realignments in the Ministries of Information and Broadcasting, Public Works and Tourism, Civil Aviation and Culture, with the aim of improving public sector management and services and enhancing social protection and infrastructural development programmes.

Information is a valuable national resource. The value of information predisposes producers, users, and handlers to corresponding obligations to ensure that public sector information is managed responsibly and astutely.

Disseminating and broadcasting information about Antigua and Barbuda within and outside the country is of national importance and must be accorded that recognition.

Communicating public sector information has not been as effective as we would desire, and frequently cause the Government to be reactive and defensive instead of the more desirable posture of being proactive, accountable and transparent.

It is therefore incumbent upon the Government, today, to improve its communication practices, build a better picture of the public sector information landscape and achieve a reputation for high performance and good governance.

Against this background, it is obligatory upon the Government of Antigua and Barbuda to employ the best practices in public relations that are consistent with a Government that puts people first.

Given that Public Administration underpins all aspects of the business of Government, it makes sense to incorporate information and broadcasting as part of its mandate.

It is best suited for public relations and to have responsibility for managing Government's reputation, guarding its image and coordinating public sector information issuance, organisation and publication to all audiences on Government's performance on delivery of services, initiatives, policies and programmes.

Consequently, I have decided that the traditional Information and Broadcasting portfolios will now fall under the Minister responsible for Finance, the Economy and Public Administration, the Honourable Harold Lovell.

As part of the government's desire to serve the nation better, cross-ministerial and cross-departmental functionaries of the government have been coordinating several tasks over the last year, and especially the last six months. This has been an informal coordinated arrangement among ministries such as Public Works, Health, Energy and Finance.

The arrangement has worked well to date. In 2013, it will be expanded to include other ministries and departments. The Ministries of National Security, and Agriculture and the Environment will form part of this cross-ministerial coordinated government service delivery programme.

A ministerial team has been established, with the aid of senior technicians, to formally give life and direction to this policy. Senior

Minister of Health, the Honourable Wilmouth Daniel, will chair the ministerial team. It is the direction of this informal coordinated approach over the last several months that had resulted in improved road networks in Browne's Avenue, much of Villa, portions of Lower Ottos, parts of Liberta, Tyrells, Fort Road, Bolans, Urlings, Lightfoot East, and other areas. The job is not done. The ministerial team and technicians are working assiduously to ensure that every community has vastly improved road networks.

The team has also been responsible for a coherent and coordinated approach to relieve a number of communities of the waste generated by residents and overgrown trees along roadsides, bulk waste and abandoned vehicles. The team has worked strategically in ensuring that stream ways are unblocked to reduce the health threats posed by vectors. Its role will expand to augment the work of the Ministry of National Security, for example, by improving public lighting in several communities.

This is an ongoing project that underscores the interdependence of government ministries. Accordingly, the Honourable Wilmouth Daniel, as Chair of the Ministerial Team, will be supported by the Ministers of Finance, Agriculture and the Environment, National Security, and Public Works and under the watchful eye of your humble and Chief Servant.

Additionally, to ensure a more effective supervision and monitoring of projects and works to be undertaken by the Ministry of Public Works, I have agreed to the appointment of a Deputy Director of Public Works commencing early in the New Year. Mr. Wesley James, a senior staff member of the Ministry will be asked to undertake this role.

The aim is to ensure that through effective supervision, coordination and management, services to the public would be more time sensitive, properly executed and in a cost effective manner.

I have also decided to appoint the Honourable Chanlah Codrington as Minister of State in the Ministry of Works and Transport to assist the substantive Minister, the Hon. Trevor Walker in the execution and timely delivery of services, projects and programmes under the Ministry's charge.

I have also decided that the portfolios of Culture, Independence, National Parks & Heritage Sites and Festivals including Carnival will now fall under the Ministry of the Prime Minister. The Honourable Eleston Adams will maintain responsibility for these areas.

In addition to the realignment of these Ministries to better serve the public, the Government will early in the New Year review the Composition of all Boards designed to make them more efficient and inline with government's transformation programme.

My Fellow Antiguan and Barbudans;

Residents and Friends of Antigua and Barbuda:

The New Year of Hope promises great things for our nation. Your government's agenda outlines that there is much work to be done during the New Year.

The commitment of your government is solid. Your support will ensure that our country stays on a path to sustainable development.

As Prime Minister and Chief Servant of the people, you can depend on me to fulfill the task for which we were elected. We can succeed. Indeed we must. I am firm in my belief that our hope for a brighter future can and will be realized.

But we must do it together.

We must work as a team, as a family, in ensuring that our nation moves forward on a sustainable path.

On behalf of the government, I thank you for your kind sentiments and prayers throughout the past year and during the Christmas Season. We appeal for your prayers and support during this New Year.

I am confident, that with the guidance and blessings of our Heavenly Father in the New Year, our nation and our people will realize our hopes and our dreams.

I wish you and your loved ones a Happy New Year and pray God's blessings on you and our nation.

May God continue to bless Antigua and Barbuda

A Happy New Year to one and all.