

Inauguration Speech Given By Her Excellency The Governor Christina Scott, Anguilla

23 July 2013

Madam speaker, I would like to thank you, the Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and other Members of the House for your kind words of welcome, and to Bishop Brooks for asking for God's blessing on our proceedings today. Your welcome and thoughtful advice echo all that I have seen of Anguilla so far – that the abundance of her natural heritage is matched only by the pride, warmth and strength of her people.

It is with the utmost sense of honour and responsibility that I have today taken the oaths of allegiance to Her Majesty The Queen, and been sworn in as the twelfth Governor of Anguilla.

Last year, the Prime Minister described the Overseas Territories as “an integral part of Britain's life and history”. He made clear that “we want to see our communities flourish in partnership, with strong and sustainable local economies”. And he committed “to work with the territories to address the challenges we face together”.

That economic imperative must remain our primary focus, and will be mine.

My predecessor addressed this Assembly four years ago at a time when Anguilla – like much of the world – was reeling from the effects of the global economic crisis. He said then that, with prudence, Anguilla would weather the storm. Today, it is encouraging that tourist visitors have increased over the past year. That is a testament to the efforts of many. But the journey ahead will not be straightforward. We should not let up in our efforts to generate wider economic opportunities whilst protecting Anguilla's rich and irreplaceable natural resources.

Of course, for any economy to grow, it must have strong roots in good governance and the careful management of public finances. This is a responsibility that all of us dedicated to public service share – from the members of this Assembly to those delivering front-line services for Anguilla and her visitors. Each of us must daily ensure that what we do delivers the best possible outcome for Anguilla, acting with objectivity and integrity, and setting aside individual interest for the collective good. I therefore welcome the commitments made by Anguilla at the recent G8 meeting in London to increase the transparency and co-operation of the financial services sector. I welcome the political commitment to the Framework for Fiscal Sustainability and Development. I welcome also steps taken to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public administration. And I look forward to supporting those commitments as they are taken forward and implemented.

Alongside these priorities, I will also of course focus my efforts on those areas where the constitution places particular responsibilities on the office of Governor: internal security, defence and preparedness for civil emergencies, foreign relations, and financial regulatory oversight.

And here I must refer to events in recent days. As I arrived in Anguilla, the police had successfully intercepted a cocaine haul worth over twenty-five million US dollars, and arrested three men. Last night's shootings in Blowing Point have resulted in seven young people in hospital, with one in a critical condition. Our thoughts and prayers are with those affected and their families. I commend the police for responding swiftly to those events and to the emergency services for providing medical treatment. And I call on anyone with relevant information to pass it to the police. This was an attack on the way of life we hold dear, and on our young people. Everything possible should and will be done to bring those responsible to justice. Every effort must be made to prevent this from happening again.

There is also, Madam Speaker, one further area I want to mention. It will not have escaped your notice that I am the first female Governor in Anguilla. Indeed, I am only the second female Governor in Britain's history. I am pretty sure that today is the first time a female Governor has been sworn in by a female judge, before a female Speaker of a House of Assembly. That is something to be proud of. And so I also intend to do what I can to support those who champion the rights of women and tackle discrimination – in whatever form it takes – so that all the young people of this island can take an equal leading role in designing and delivering Anguilla's tomorrow.

These then will be the priorities that drive my service. But I do not arrive with settled views on how those objectives are reached, and the road Anguilla must travel to get there. The old days of colonial prescription are long past. Only Anguilla's people – her greatest asset – are equipped to design and deliver her future.

So my first priority will be to listen. I want to listen to as many views as possible, so that I can understand what is of concern, what gives you hope, and your dreams for your families, your communities and your country.

And then I will roll up my sleeves and work with your elected representatives, public servants, with business, civil society, faith groups and communities to support the continued development of a secure, resilient and prosperous Anguilla.

That is my commitment to you all today. Thank you.