

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**THE HONOURABLE DAVID THOMPSON, M.P.**

**PRIME MINISTER OF BARBADOS**

**AT THE**

**OPENING CEREMONY**

**OF**

**THE 8<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE OF DEFENCE MINISTERS**  
**OF THE AMERICAS**

**IN**

**BANFF, CANADA, 2-6 SEPTEMBER 2008**

**Theme: “Hemispheric, Regional and Sub-Regional  
Defence and Security Enhancement: Confidence  
Building through Cooperation and Collaboration”**

The selected sub-themes relating to the participation of Armed and Security Forces in the areas of "Assistance during natural

My delegation is pleased to have been afforded this opportunity to interact with and engage the distinguished representatives from other hemispheric member States on the substantive defence and security-related issues that are slated for discussion at this Conference.

We are also grateful for the assistance rendered to small delegations such as ours in facilitating our travel to participate in each ministerial conference.

The Barbados delegation wishes to express its profound gratitude to the Government and people of Canada, and more particularly to the beautiful Town of Banff, for the most gracious hospitality and friendly welcome that we have experienced.

Mr. Chairman, Ministers of Defence of the Americas, Secretary General of the Organisation of American States, other Heads of Delegations, Delegates, Observers, other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

Small developing States continue to be confronted with multidimensional and 'borderless' threats and challenges, including the perennial onslaught of natural disasters.

Ladies and Gentlemen, every two years we gather in this august forum to discuss agenda issues that are important to the defence and security of the Americas. We deliver great opening speeches, we pontificate on the issues at hand in the Working Groups and Plenary Sessions, and we produce well-structured declarations and related conference documents. The delegation of Barbados is, however, concerned whether the people of the Americas are reaping the fruits of enhanced peace, security and prosperity from those seeds that we sow biennially at these Conferences.

Barbados welcomes the varied agenda and trusts that our deliberations at this conference will serve to build confidence among our sovereign and independent States and to sow seeds of peace and security for the benefit of all our peoples.

we seek to deepen our cooperative and collaborative efforts. hosted events" and "Peacekeeping" are of great relevance as disasters", "Assistance during major nationally and regionally-

Whether such support by a small Defence Force is in the form of rescue, recovery, reconstruction or rehabilitation of the critical infrastructure of the island in the aftermath of natural

The use of the military in non-traditional roles is not a new concept to Barbados. Two weeks ago, I had the distinct honour of presenting commendations to several members of the Barbados Defence Force in recognition of their outstanding service in a deadly natural disaster that occurred one year ago.

My delegation therefore welcomes the discussion on the participation of Armed and Security Forces in natural disasters. The destructive and debilitating effects of Hurricane Ivan on the island of Grenada in 2004 have, beyond any doubt, highlighted the important role of the Armed and Security Forces in providing for the safety, security and well-being of our people.

Barbados has so far escaped the ravages of major weather systems on their paths of destruction across the Atlantic, but was quite recently reminded of the shock and chaos that emanates from earth tremors.

In our view, regional organizations and mechanisms such as the Caribbean Disaster Response Agency and the OAS' Inter-

post-disasters situations that threaten the security of the State. activity and other natural disasters, and particularly in such are seriously affected by tropical storms, hurricanes, volcanic overemphasized, especially in situations where multiple states rehabilitation. The importance of such alliances cannot be this hemisphere in the area of post-disaster response and islands of the Caribbean sub-region and other sub-regions in make a call for the forging of closer alliances between the responses to disasters with such seriousness that we wish to Mr Chairman, my delegation views the matter of coordinated

The selective and sole use of military power and resources for engagement on traditional military missions is not a viable or realistic option. The very scarce financial resources invested in Armed Forces must be used when natural or man-made disasters leave trails of death and destruction in their wake.

disasters, Barbados views the employment of its military in such non-traditional missions as an unavoidable and necessary contribution to the security of its people.

The area of Peacekeeping is yet another area of great significance where military forces of the Americas have made, and continue to make very outstanding contributions to global peace and security. The valiant efforts of several States which seek to establish and maintain a peaceful, stable and secure throughout the region.

The most recent experiences of the CARICOM Sub-Region in staging the 2007 Cricket World Cup clearly highlight the critical role and function of the Armed Forces. During this event, the military operated seamlessly in direct support of the Police and other State and non-governmental agencies to ensure that a comprehensive regional security apparatus was achieved

citizens alike.

The use of the armed forces in providing assistance during major nationally and regionally-hosted events is fully supported by my delegation, once it is to establish and maintain a safe and secure environment for visitors and

throughout the Hemisphere.

American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction should effectively coordinate emergency preparedness and responses

In the Quebec 2001 Summit of the Americas Declaration, the Heads of State and Governments acknowledged the expanded concept of hemispheric security when they noted that "We reiterate our commitment to combat new, multi-dimensional threats to the security of our societies. Foremost among these threats are the global drug problem and related crimes, the

The main threats facing this hemisphere in this early period of the 21<sup>st</sup> century do not arise from external military aggression against State sovereignty. Evidence points to the predominance of non-traditional security threats which often develop into serious challenges to democracy, economic well-being, social cohesion, political stability and, ultimately, to national security and prosperity.

Threats to the peace, security and stability of the State today and in the foreseeable future will be multidimensional in nature and scope and will necessitate the prudent and judicious application of all instruments of national power, including the Armed Forces, to counter them.

environment through the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti is commendable.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, my delegation holds firm to the view that through cooperation, collaboration and compromise,

Barbados wishes to seize this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the deepening of relations with all States in the Americas through the reinforcement of a culture of mutual trust and respect and the forging of peaceful and friendly relations with all States.

Each State articulates its own strategic vision, identifies its vital and other interests and the threats thereto, and develops its goals and objectives in pursuit of these interests, but in our view a unilateral approach to addressing our defence and security threats and challenges will not reap the required results. We are, in most instances, limited by our size, capability and capacity and should recognise that our response to common threats and challenges such as natural disasters must of necessity be a collaborative one.

*illicit traffic in and criminal use of firearms, the growing danger posed by organised crime and the general problem of violence in our societies".*



we can build a more harmonious, prosperous and secure hemisphere for our people.

Barbados therefore stands ready to play its part in strengthening the security chain that binds the Americas together.

I thank you.