



# The Barbados Advocate



For the cause that lacks assistance; 'Gainst the wrongs that need resistance; For the future in the distance; And the good that I can do.

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## VISION FOR THE FUTURE v

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By Regina Selman

The Commonwealth must truly believe in its capacity to be a tremendous force for good and a strong and effective influence on the course of human affairs.

This announcement by the Right Honourable Owen Arthur, Prime Minister of Barbados and Minister of Finance, came at the Opening Ceremony of the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting, held yesterday evening at Sherbourne Conference Centre.

With this said, the Agenda for the Meeting being held at the Barbados Hilton over the next two days, amongst other things, will allow for the consideration of a number of presentations, all setting out practical proposals by which the Millennium Development Goals may be better achieved. Five years ago Barbados wholeheartedly adopted the Millennium Development Goals that gave quantifiable expression to the substance of the Millennium Declaration and they have been woven into Barbados National Strategic Plan for the next 20 years.

If nothing else, we must use this meeting to add substantial value to the deliberations and the programme which has been conceived to bring an end to global poverty Prime Minister Arthur urged the delegates gathered.

The Millennium Development Goals as expressed the PM said, while being laudable are however limited. The goals for example, of cutting by half by 2015 the proportion of the world's citizens who live in abject poverty and who have to endure hunger will, even if achieved, still mean that countless millions will have to continue to be plagued by debilitating poverty. It is as if the global society proposes to cross a chasm by a series of small jumps, Arthur remarked. In the PM's opinion this is all taking place at a time when the world can do better, as the means exists to bring extreme deprivation to an end. However he pointed out, is the moral commitment by those who have the means or the control of the means to get the job done, is lacking.

The last thing the poor need is the idealisation of their poverty. This romanticism of the poor finds expression in those aspects of the Millennium Development Programme, which prescribe that the poor must do more to pull themselves up by their bootstraps when sometimes they do not have boots.

It is my judgement that this meeting of finance ministers can add great value to the current discourse on global development, by delivering the message that the Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved in the absence of, and outside the context of the fundamental global economic reform, the Finance Minister remarked.



Minister of Finance, Kingdom of Swaziland, Hon. Majoji Sithole (left), Commonwealth Secretary-General Rt. Hon. Don McKinnon and Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Barbados, Rt. Hon Owen Arthur (standing) at the Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting yesterday. Ç

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Making reference to the July/August issue of Foreign Affairs, in which Nancy Birdsall and others contributed to the matter of How to Help Poor Countries , Arthur noted that the argument has been made, that to help developing countries help themselves, wealthy nations must begin to lift the burden they impose on the poor . Currently he said, the developed world uses international trade agreements to impose costly and onerous obligations on poor countries.

Migration has been one of the principal means by which poor people have reached for an opportunity to improve their material conditions, yet there is no commitment to the mobility of labour, the PM cited.

Can the Commonwealth not set an example for the rest of the global society, by prescribing an enlightened regime to support the mobility of labour, as a crucial element in the search to eradicate global poverty? he questioned.

Of some influence to the meeting, he said, should be the fact that poor countries that have made progress, have done so not by following the orthodox policy prescriptions trumpeted by the international institutions, but by taking advantage of adequate room for policy autonomy and experimentation, and often creative unorthodox policy innovations.u

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