



## **Prime Minister Gaston Browne**

**On**

**The 37<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence: 1981 - 2018**

### **“ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA: FORWARD TOGETHER”**

Congratulations to the nation of Antigua and Barbuda on the attainment of 37 successful years of sovereignty and freedom. These have been thirty-seven glorious years, expressive of the superb capabilities and talents of the Antigua and Barbuda people and their leaders. The people have provided un-paralleled opportunities for progress. Though the beginning of modern Antigua and Barbuda in 1632 was undoubtedly unwholesome, the resistance of the emancipated people eventually prevailed. A new Antigua and Barbuda began to emerge—especially after 1951—with the introduction of adult suffrage the island-nation set off on a new trajectory.

While the imperative to create wealth and to generate jobs is our nation’s new mantra, the decades following internal self-government in 1967 were extraordinarily productive years. The deepwater port was constructed, a new telephone switching system was introduced, an expanded electricity plant and the first desalination plant were built, new schools were constructed, new hotels and new industries producing a variety of manufactured goods were invited to start-up.

Our journey since 1981, as measured by economic growth, has been splendid. Our country produced more economic opportunities and jobs than could be naturally absorbed. Many CARICOM and other immigrants joined us, and propelled economic growth further by creating new demand for food, housing, transportation and other necessities. The data clearly show the upward trend.

Several very destructive hurricanes slowed our growth but could not stop us. Yet, all small island-states continue to be threatened by global climate change. The enormity of the task to rein in the profligate fossil-fuel consumers is proving difficult; a multi-lateral agreement that aimed to achieve meager progress has been vitiated by the largest state-emitter of greenhouse gases. The Antigua and Barbuda nation will pursue vigorously the task of ensuring environmental justice for all.

As we move forward together, the quality of justice is a matter of great concern to all in the nation. The people are focused on our inevitable adoption of the Caribbean Court of Justice as our apex court. On November 6, 2018, the registered voters in our land will have the opportunity to engage in a nationwide referendum; that exercise will determine whether our people take a forward step or reject the inevitable. I encourage all to vote “yes”, since this is not a partisan political issue.

As we move forward in the years to come, more improvements and changes will mark the development of Antigua and Barbuda. The future is bound to be glorious and the nation will have established the basis upon which the Caribbean Economic Powerhouse is being constructed.

Happy Independence!

Gaston A. Browne  
Prime Minister