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Press Release: Prime Minister Gaston Browne Participates in High-Level Oceans Declaration Event during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

Apia, Samoa – Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Hon. Gaston Browne, participated in the High-Level Commonwealth Side-Event, ‘Implementing the Commonwealth Ocean Declaration to Meet International Commitments and Accelerate Financing for a Healthy, Sustainable and Resilient Ocean.’

The prominent event featured perspectives from leaders within Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including Honourable Sitiveni Rabuka, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, and Honourable Ahmed Afif, Deputy Vice President of Seychelles.

During his address, Prime Minister Browne emphasised the existential threat posed by climate change to SIDS, associated with increased ocean warming, rising sea levels, and the prevalence of coral bleaching. He pointed to the critical importance of addressing these issues, both for the livelihoods of citizens and the protection of biological variability.

Prime Minister Browne highlighted Antigua and Barbuda's leadership in adopting nature-based technology to safeguard coral reefs, which act as natural barriers against coastal erosion. This innovative approach not only preserves marine ecosystems but also shields the nation's shores from the adverse impacts of climate change.

Further underscoring the nation's commitment to marine protection, the Prime Minister acknowledged the work of the Center of Oceanography at the University of the West Indies. He praised the institution for using advanced scientific technology to identify endangered marine species and develop strategies for their conservation.

At the international level, Prime Minister Browne reaffirmed Antigua and Barbuda's ongoing efforts through global advocacy. He highlighted the country's active participation in the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS), underscoring the need for collective action to address the challenges facing SIDS.

In closing, Prime Minister Browne stated, “Antigua and Barbuda is committed to playing its part in protecting marine spaces for the long-term health and resilience of our ocean's biodiversity. Domestically, we are leading by example and continue to advocate for stronger global commitments to safeguard our shared future.”

At CHOGM 2022, leaders agreed to create a Commonwealth Ocean Declaration (COD) to guide ocean action for the next four years. Key priorities include effective marine management, achieving the 30x30 ocean protection target, and mobilising finance for ocean commitments. The event introduced the COD and its implementation pathway to CHOGM delegations and allowed leaders to share their ambitions.