

**Statement by the Hon Gaston Browne  
Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda  
Preliminary remarks on the passage of Hurricane Irma  
6th September 2017**

My first words must be of thanks.

Thanks to Almighty God in all his forms for standing at our side at a time of great adversity. There is no doubt that the Good Lord is on our side.

We in Antigua have weathered the most powerful hurricane ever to storm its way through the Caribbean.

And we have done so with stunning results.

The forecast was that Antigua would be devastated, our infrastructure demolished, people killed and our economy destroyed.

In the light of day, the picture is very different.

In Antigua, no life has been lost – all the people survived.

The guests in our hotels are all well.

Even our animals were protected from this massive storm.

Our airport will be open for flights into and out of Antigua by 2pm today.

The people of Antigua should all be very proud of the part that each of them played in our impressive story of readiness and resilience.

I dare to say that no other country in the Caribbean would have been as well prepared as we were. People heeded the warnings of my government to treat Hurricane Irma with absolute seriousness, and everyone did.

Properties were properly shuttered and protected, and neighbours and friends opened their homes to less fortunate persons to shelter through the long night.

There was a chain of brotherhood and sisterhood that strengthened our collective resolve.

The work that the government initiated in advance of the storm paid remarkable dividends.

The drains, gutters and reservoirs that were cleared in advance, ensured that the island experienced no flooding, hence eliminating the possibility of water-borne disease.

While there has been property damage, it is not anywhere near the horrendous injury that was feared.

The essential point is that our main infrastructure has stood-up and our country can resume normal life within hours.

From early this morning, the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force has been on the streets clearing fallen trees and debris.

They were followed by contingents from the Solid Waste Unit.

Ours has been an exceptional story of resilience, honed by past experience and by the high level of our preparedness to confront the challenges of the world's mightiest and most dangerous hurricane.

With regard to Barbuda, preliminary reports indicate damage to rooves and to some buildings, but I have had no report of any fatalities.

Barbuda too benefitted from a high level of readiness, responsive to the urgings of the government and from the preparations that were made in advance, including the shelter constructed for that purpose.

I was able to drive through many areas of Antigua since 5.30 this morning and I was heartened by what I saw.

I intend to visit Barbuda at the earliest opportunity to see conditions on the island for myself.

Meantime, it is clear that Antigua and Barbuda has stood up to a mighty test.

Our preparedness led to impressive resilience.

Our people are safe, our country is secure and our piece of paradise remains open to be shared by people from all over the world.

God bless you, and God continue to bless our beloved land – Antigua and Barbuda.

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