

REPORT FROM THE CABINET OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA MEETING OF WEDNESDAY 26th August 2026

The Pastor who led the meditation and prayers at Wednesday's meeting of the Cabinet drew his message from Isaiah 45:17 and the verses which follow, reminding the Cabinet of God's enduring promise of salvation, His sovereignty over all creation, and His call for His people to turn to Him.

The Pastor reflected on the assurance contained in the scripture that *"Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation."* He reminded the Cabinet that God remains constant and faithful, even during periods of uncertainty and difficulty, and that a nation which acknowledges Him can draw strength, wisdom and direction from His presence.

Drawing further from the passage, the Pastor emphasized that God did not create the earth without purpose, but formed it to be inhabited. In the same way, he said, every individual and every nation has a purpose and must seek God's guidance in fulfilling that purpose.

He drew particular attention to the call in Isaiah 45:22: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." The Pastor encouraged the nation to respond positively to that invitation, recognising that human wisdom and ability alone are insufficient to overcome every challenge confronting a society.

He encouraged the Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet to continue seeking God's direction as they deliberate on matters of national importance. He prayed that they would be granted wisdom to make sound decisions, courage to confront difficult circumstances and compassion to remain mindful of the needs of the people whom they have been called to serve.

The Pastor also called upon Antiguan and Barbudans to recognise their individual responsibility in building a peaceful, caring and prosperous society. He stressed that responding to God's call requires more than words; it demands a willingness to demonstrate love, respect, unity, forgiveness and concern for others.

Concluding the meditation, the Pastor offered prayers for Prime Minister the Honourable Gaston Browne and the members of the Cabinet, asking Almighty God to guide and strengthen them in the execution of their duties.

He prayed also for Antigua and Barbuda and its people, asking God to help the nation respond positively to His call, to draw closer to Him and to remain united in the pursuit of peace, progress and national development.

The Pastor concluded by committing the Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda into God's care, praying that His wisdom, protection and favour would continue to rest upon the nation.

1.

Cabinet Calls for Increased Food Production and Expansion of Agricultural Water Infrastructure

The Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda has renewed its call for increased domestic food production and has directed the Ministry of Agriculture to accelerate the construction and rehabilitation of dams, ponds and other water-catchment facilities to provide farmers with greater access to water for agricultural production.

During its meeting on Wednesday, Cabinet held extensive discussions on national food security, emphasising the need for Antigua and Barbuda to increase the quantity and variety of food produced locally and to further reduce the country's dependence on imported food.

Minister for Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and the Blue Economy, the Honourable Anthony Smith Jr., reported that the Ministry has been actively constructing dams and clearing and rehabilitating ponds and other water sources in anticipation of rainfall during this period.

Cabinet noted that capturing and storing as much rainwater as possible is essential to building a more resilient agricultural sector, particularly given the country's vulnerability to prolonged dry periods and irregular rainfall.

The Cabinet consequently instructed the Minister and his technical team to significantly upscale the programme for the construction of dams and ponds, while continuing the clearing and rehabilitation of existing water catchments.

The Ministry was also instructed to intensify measures aimed at empowering farmers to place more acreage under production and to expand the Ministry's own food-production programmes.

The latest instructions build upon several measures already being implemented as part of the Government's national food-security strategy.

Cabinet noted that the objective is to develop a national network capable of capturing and storing greater quantities of rainwater for agricultural purposes, thereby providing farmers with a more reliable and affordable supply of water and reducing agriculture's dependence on desalinated potable water.

The Government's food-security programme is also addressing access to productive agricultural lands. Earlier this year, the Ministry reported that approximately 150 acres of underutilised farmland had been repossessed, with Cabinet approving 75 acres for allocation specifically to youth and women farmers. The initiative is intended to put productive agricultural land into the hands of persons committed to farming and increasing national output.

Other initiatives include the development of the Tissue Culture Laboratory at Bethesda, designed to provide farmers with disease-free and high-quality planting material, and collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and CARDI on improved sweet potato varieties, farmer training, seed security and climate-resilient agricultural practices.

Cabinet stressed that these initiatives must ultimately translate into more locally produced food reaching households, supermarkets, hotels, restaurants and other consumers.

The Government is therefore encouraging farmers to take advantage of available lands, improved water infrastructure, planting materials, technical assistance and other support being provided through the Ministry of Agriculture to expand production.

Cabinet reaffirmed that food security is a national priority **and** that increasing domestic agricultural production is essential not only to reducing the country's food-import bill, but also to strengthening Antigua and Barbuda's resilience against external supply disruptions, climatic events and other global challenges.

The Cabinet has therefore charged the Ministry of Agriculture with moving aggressively to expand water-storage capacity, empower existing and new farmers, place additional agricultural lands into productive use, and plant more food for the people of Antigua and Barbuda.

2.

Cabinet Receives Joint Security Briefing on Preparations for CHOGM 2026

The Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda on Wednesday received a comprehensive joint presentation from the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda and the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force on security preparations for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM 2026), to be hosted by Antigua and Barbuda.

The presentation outlined the broad security framework being developed to ensure that CHOGM is conducted in a safe, secure and successful environment, with appropriate protection for visiting Heads of Government, delegates, officials, residents and visitors.

Cabinet was advised that preparations involve a coordinated, multi-agency approach bringing together the Police and Defence Force with other national security and border agencies, supported by regional and international partners. The approach emphasizes close coordination, information sharing and clearly defined responsibilities among the participating agencies.

The security leadership also advised Cabinet that preparations extend beyond the protection of conference activities to include border and airport security, public safety, cybersecurity and the protection of critical national infrastructure, while seeking to minimise disruption to the normal activities of residents and businesses.

Cabinet expressed satisfaction with the level of planning undertaken to date and stressed the importance of continued training, coordination and readiness in the period leading up to CHOGM. The security agencies indicated that preparations will include further integration exercises, communications testing and rehearsals to ensure that participating personnel and agencies are fully prepared.

The Cabinet reaffirmed the Government's commitment to providing the resources and support necessary for the security agencies to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Cabinet is confident that the collaborative efforts of Antigua and Barbuda's security agencies, supported by regional and international partners, will contribute to the successful hosting of CHOGM 2026 while maintaining the safety and security of the nation and the general public.

3.

Cabinet Receives People's Forum and Commonwealth Foundation Presentation on Advancing Antigua and Barbuda's Creative Economy

The Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda on Wednesday received a delegation associated with the People's Forum of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM 2026) and the Commonwealth Foundation, which presented proposals aimed at strengthening the country's creative economy and establishing a framework for its long-term development.

The delegation included Razmi Farook, Director-General of the Commonwealth Foundation; Carla Cole, Deputy Director-General of the Commonwealth Foundation; Renee Robinson, Consultant on the Creative Industries; Senator Abena St. Luce, Deputy Lead of the Local People's Forum; and Samantha Marshall, Lead of the Local People's Forum.

The presentation formed part of ongoing preparations for CHOGM 2026 and focused particularly on opportunities to use the upcoming international gathering to create a lasting legacy for Antigua and Barbuda's creative and cultural industries.

Consultant Renee Robinson outlined the considerable economic potential of the creative sector, particularly for Antigua and Barbuda's young population. She noted that the country already possesses a vibrant creative economy, but greater formalisation, appropriate legislation, incentives, data collection and institutional support could significantly increase its contribution to employment, investment and economic growth.

The Cabinet was presented with examples from other countries where deliberate policy interventions have resulted in substantial growth in the creative industries. The Dominican Republic's experience in developing its film sector was highlighted, including the introduction of legislation, incentives and registration mechanisms that contributed to significant expansion in film production.

The presentation also pointed to Jamaica's experience, where formal registration of creative businesses has been associated with improved economic performance, and where the creative economy has been estimated to contribute as much as five per cent of GDP.

Particular attention was given to the potential linkages between **the** creative industries and Antigua and Barbuda's tourism sector. Among the concepts discussed was the possibility of developing specialised projects that combine luxury tourism with music and other creative industries, thereby attracting international artists and generating additional economic activity.

Cabinet was informed that work is now underway on the development of a White Paper and an implementation roadmap for Antigua and Barbuda's creative economy. The process builds on earlier consultations and reports and is intended to provide a pathway towards the necessary policy and legislative framework.

The Commonwealth Foundation representatives indicated that CHOGM 2026 provides an important opportunity to advance the initiative. The creative economy is expected to feature in both the Business Forum and People's Forum, including through a panel involving experts from across the

Commonwealth. The Foundation is also supporting the development of the White Paper and implementation roadmap so that commitments and opportunities emerging from CHOGM can be incorporated into a sustainable national strategy.

Cabinet welcomed the initiative and reaffirmed the Government's commitment to investing in and expanding Antigua and Barbuda's creative industries. The Cabinet expressed particular interest in receiving technical assistance from the Commonwealth Foundation to further develop national creative arts policies and strengthen the accompanying legislative framework.

The Cabinet noted that Antigua and Barbuda possesses significant talent in music, film, festivals, visual and performing arts and other creative disciplines and that these sectors can play a greater role in diversifying the national economy, generating employment and entrepreneurship, particularly among young people.

Cabinet also welcomed continued collaboration between the Government, the Commonwealth Foundation, the People's Forum and local stakeholders as Antigua and Barbuda prepares to host CHOGM 2026.

The Government views the initiative as an opportunity to ensure that the hosting of CHOGM produces benefits extending well beyond the meeting itself, leaving behind stronger institutions, new investment opportunities and a sustainable framework for the continued growth of Antigua and Barbuda's creative economy.

4.

Cabinet Establishes Subcommittee to Review Rates of Pay for Heavy-Duty Equipment Operators

The Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda has commenced a review of the rates of pay applicable to heavy-duty equipment operators employed within the public service.

Cabinet invited senior officials from the Ministry of Works, including the Junior Minister, Permanent Secretary, Director and Deputy Director, to participate in a discussion on the current rates of pay and the circumstances affecting the remuneration of heavy-duty equipment operators.

During the discussion, Cabinet was presented with several factors affecting the existing rates, including the nature and demands of the work, the skills and experience required to operate heavy-duty equipment, working conditions, levels of responsibility, and prevailing rates within the wider labour market.

Heavy-duty equipment operators perform an important role in the development and maintenance of Antigua and Barbuda's infrastructure. Their duties require the operation of specialised and expensive machinery and demand appropriate levels of training, competence and experience.

Cabinet therefore agreed that the matter warranted further examination to ensure that the remuneration attached to these positions appropriately reflects the responsibilities and requirements of the work, while also taking account of the Government's overall public-sector wage structure and fiscal responsibilities.

Cabinet has established a Subcommittee to conduct a more detailed review of the matter.

The Subcommittee comprises:

- The Minister for Works and her Junior Minister;

- The Attorney General; and
- The Minister for Social Transformation.

The Subcommittee has been tasked with examining the existing rates of pay and determining whether they remain appropriate in light of current labour-market conditions.

As part of its work, the Subcommittee will compare the remuneration of heavy-duty equipment operators in the public service with prevailing rates being paid by private-sector employers for comparable work.

The Subcommittee will also consider the different classifications and responsibilities associated with heavy-duty equipment operations, including the qualifications, experience, technical skills, working conditions and level of responsibility required for the various positions.

Cabinet has also directed that the relevant trade union be engaged as part of the review.

The Government considers consultation with the recognised representative of the affected workers to be an important component of the process and is committed to ensuring that the views and concerns of the operators are properly considered before a final recommendation is made.

The review will therefore take into account both objective market information and the perspectives of the employees and their representatives.

The Government recognises the valuable contribution made by heavy-duty equipment operators to the country's infrastructure programme and public works.

At the same time, Cabinet must ensure that any adjustment to public-sector remuneration is fair, equitable and sustainable and does not create unintended disparities within the wider public-service compensation system.

The Government has consistently sought to balance the need to improve the income and welfare of public-sector workers with the responsibility to maintain sound fiscal management and ensure that public expenditure remains sustainable.

The Subcommittee will complete its assessment, undertake the necessary consultations and make recommendations to Cabinet.

Cabinet has not yet made a final decision on any adjustment to the rates of pay for heavy-duty equipment operators.

Any decision on revised rates will be considered by Cabinet following receipt and assessment of the Subcommittee's recommendations.

5.

Cabinet Welcomes Strengthening of Emergency Response and Security Capabilities at V.C. Bird International Airport

The Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda welcomed an update on the continued strengthening of emergency response, safety and aviation security capabilities at the V.C. Bird International Airport, including the provision of new emergency-response equipment and a further commitment of support from Allen & Co.

Cabinet was informed that two emergency vehicles are being handed over to the airport, providing additional resources to strengthen the ability of firefighters, emergency medical personnel and other airport emergency-response teams to respond rapidly and effectively when required.

The investment reflects the importance placed on ensuring that Antigua and Barbuda's principal international gateway is equipped with reliable emergency-response resources capable of supporting the safe operation of the airport and protecting passengers, employees and other users of the facility.

During the presentation, Allen & Co. emphasised that its relationship with Antigua and Barbuda extends beyond the procurement and delivery of equipment.

The company recalled an earlier occasion when the airport required additional rescue capability and Allen & Co. responded by donating a Jaws of Life rescue tool to ensure that emergency personnel had the necessary equipment available when needed.

The company stressed that effective partnership requires being responsive when a need arises and ensuring that equipment supplied to an airport is appropriate for its operating environment.

Cabinet welcomed this approach and noted that the acquisition of specialised emergency equipment must be accompanied by proper training, maintenance, technical support and reliable access to replacement parts.

The Government considers these factors especially important in a small-island environment, where shipping, technical resources, maintenance requirements and long-term sustainability must be considered when investments in specialised equipment are made.

Cabinet also welcomed the announcement by Allen & Co. that it will donate an XRC 60-40 X-ray screening machine to the V.C. Bird International Airport.

The additional screening equipment will support the airport as it moves into the next phase of strengthening and modernising its aviation-security operations.

The donation is expected to provide security personnel with an additional technological resource to support their work and enhance the airport's existing screening capabilities.

Cabinet noted that emergency preparedness and aviation security are complementary components of maintaining a safe and efficient international airport. As technology changes and international safety and security requirements continue to evolve, Antigua and Barbuda must continue investing in the systems, equipment and human resources necessary to meet those requirements.

Allen & Co. also encouraged the personnel who will operate the new emergency-response equipment to train with it, become thoroughly familiar with its operation and maintain it properly so that it remains ready whenever required.

The company outlined an approach based on first understanding an airport's actual operational requirements, identifying equipment suited to those requirements, supporting its acquisition and delivery, assisting those responsible for operating it, and remaining involved throughout the equipment's working life.

Cabinet endorsed the emphasis on training and sustainability, noting that acquiring equipment is only one component of strengthening national capability. Ensuring that personnel are properly trained and that equipment remains serviceable and supported over the long term is equally important.

Cabinet expressed appreciation to Allen & Co. for its continued support and partnership with Antigua and Barbuda, including the latest commitment to donate the X-ray screening equipment.

The Cabinet also commended the V.C. Bird International Airport Authority (ABAA), airport firefighters, emergency medical personnel, security officers and other employees whose work contributes daily to maintaining the safety, security and efficient operation of the airport.

The Government will continue supporting investments designed to strengthen emergency preparedness and aviation security at V.C. Bird International Airport, recognising the airport's critical importance to Antigua and Barbuda's tourism industry, economy and international connectivity.

Cabinet noted that there is much to be proud of in the continued development of V.C. Bird International Airport, while recognising that its safety and security capabilities must continue to evolve.

The Government therefore remains committed to ensuring that the airport is properly equipped, its personnel appropriately trained and its emergency and security systems continually strengthened to meet both present and future requirements.

6.

Antigua and Barbuda Advances Passenger Name Record Framework to Strengthen Border Security

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade and Immigration, the Honourable E. Paul Chet Greene, updated the Cabinet on progress towards the implementation of a Passenger Name Record (PNR) Framework for Antigua and Barbuda, with technical and operational support from the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS).

The Minister advised Cabinet that CARICOM IMPACS has welcomed Antigua and Barbuda's enactment of Passenger Name Record legislation, describing it as an important step towards strengthening national and regional capacity to combat transnational crime and improve border security through more effective passenger risk assessment.

Under the proposed arrangement, Antigua and Barbuda will be provided access to CARICOM IMPACS' regional PNR solution, which facilitates the secure collection, processing and analysis of passenger information for risk-assessment purposes. The regional system is intended to allow participating authorities to better identify potential risks while ensuring that passenger information is handled in accordance with national legislation and applicable data-protection requirements.

Cabinet was advised that the initiative will also support the establishment and operationalisation of Antigua and Barbuda's Passenger Information Unit (PIU). CARICOM IMPACS will provide assistance with the development of policies, procedures, governance arrangements and operational protocols required for the effective functioning of the Unit.

Importantly, specialised training will be provided to officers assigned to the Passenger Information Unit in areas including passenger risk analysis, intelligence development, PNR processing and data-protection requirements. Ongoing technical assistance will also be provided to ensure the sustainability of the national system.

Minister Greene informed Cabinet that the regional approach will allow Antigua and Barbuda to utilise existing CARICOM security infrastructure and expertise while benefiting from economies of scale. This will avoid the considerably greater costs that would be associated with independently acquiring, operating and maintaining a standalone national PNR system.

Cabinet welcomed the initiative and agreed to proceed with the proposed arrangement with CARICOM IMPACS. The appropriate written confirmation will be provided, allowing the administrative, technical and implementation processes to move forward.

Following formal confirmation, CARICOM IMPACS and the relevant national authorities will meet to finalise implementation arrangements, technical requirements, respective responsibilities and a proposed timeline for bringing the system into operation.

Cabinet noted that the implementation of the Passenger Name Record Framework forms part of the Government's continuing efforts to modernise border management, strengthen national security and deepen security cooperation with CARICOM institutions and regional partners.

The Government remains committed to ensuring that Antigua and Barbuda's border-management systems keep pace with international best practices while maintaining appropriate safeguards for the protection and lawful use of passenger information.