



2021 New Year Message
The Honourable Gaston Browne
Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda
"From adversity to prosperity"
1st January, 2021

Fellow citizens and residents,

As the year 2020 fades in the darkness of midnight, it is understandable that we want to urge it on its way.

No year in human history has witnessed a phenomenon that has inflicted such deep destruction, or caused such great suffering across the globe.

At the beginning of the year, we, in Antigua and Barbuda, were poised to leap to new economic heights.

Before us glowed the real assurance, of massive investment, strong economic and fiscal performance, increased employment, a higher quality of life and the empowerment of ownership.

Overnight, this assurance was dimmed.

Of course, we were not alone. Every nation, every people, every community in the world was laid low.

But, not everything about 2020 was bad.

As a nation, we stared the world's greatest adversity in the face. Neither crouching down in fear, nor surrendering to its power; we acted in unity to resist it.

These trials have reminded us all, that we are tied together in this life as one

nation, one people, with a common destiny; recognising that despair of any of us touches all of us.

But they have also reminded us that we are stronger than we imagined. And that no trial can daunt the will of a nation whose people assume the mantle of their brother's keeper, their sister's protector, and their children's guardian.

We recall with special gratitude the selfless toil of our doctors and nurses, our policemen, soldiers, customs and ONDCP officers and the others, who braved the risks and uncertainties to protect lives and livelihoods.

Today, our country is demonstrably one of the safest places in the world – made so by the resilience, collective courage, wisdom and competence we showed as a people, in containing the spread of COVID 19.

The confidence we displayed amid so colossal a test as COVID-19, is our own inspiration.

Despite the distractions of the pessimists and the sophomaniac few, with their predictions of doom and gloom, we proceeded successfully as the first country in the Caribbean to reopen its borders.

In essence, we successfully confronted an immense danger, while we endured its bruises and battering; and now we stand vigorous and vibrant, as a resilient people, filled with optimism of the prospects for a brighter future.

Hence, we know that whatever the New Year brings, we have the confidence to face it, the capacity to master it and the will to triumph over it.

The early light of the new year's dawning has already begun to dispel the darkness of the old, revealing a world renewed and revived, ready to resume its stride on the pathway to human progress and prosperity.

Already hundreds of thousands of people in the United States and parts of Europe and Asia have been inoculated against the various strains of COVID-19.

Within the next few months, millions of people will be vaccinated, bringing a high level of safety in the resumption of normal life, including travel by sea and air.

We look forward to the arrival, within our shores, of vaccines that our government took the proactive step of ordering a few months ago.

In 2021, even as we envision a year that will be a springboard to a brighter future, we will continue to put first the safety of our people.

Air travel to our country will increase and expand in the coming months, precisely because we have made Antigua and Barbuda safe and desirable.

The reliability in keeping our borders opened without disruptions has helped us to maintain the advantage of increased visitor arrivals, to keep our hotels open, our businesses humming, and employment growing.

That is why until we have inoculated every person in our society, each of us continues to owe the responsibility to keep the other safe.

Strict adherence to the protocols including: Physical distancing, wearing masks and hand sanitizing; continue to be vital until inoculations have been delivered to all.

So, as we continue to keep our borders open this winter, providing hundreds of thousands of visitors a safe haven, a secure refuge and important relief from the stresses and strains of COVID-19; we shall also maintain the protocols that have kept our people healthy and made our country safe and attractive.

These are our twin goals: maintaining a healthy nation and restoring a vibrant economy.

Self-determination, fueled by robust local direct investments, is a prerequisite in restoring our vibrant economy. Therefore, we implore our citizens and residents to invest and, to begin to position themselves to seize the abundant opportunities that will surely arise post COVID.

Despite the deep economic scars of COVID 19, we remain confident about a quick labour market recovery by the fourth quarter of next year; however, as I said before, we must remain vigilant in protecting each other from the spread of COVID during the next few months to avert a protracted recovery.

The time is not far off until our harbours will be lined with cruise ships, our streets crowded with shoppers, our hotels filled with guests, and our people's lives enriched by work and by earnings.

The rhythms of carnival will vibrate; costumes will be extravagant; the sound of cheers will ring out in cricket fields, football grounds and basketball courts across the land; and congregations will gather in our churches, as we restore the

passionate soul of our lively nation.

As 2021 dawns, our nation must show the same selfless courage in a time of blessing, as we did in a time of crisis.

Let us, together, fulfil the promise of 2021, drawing on the confidence in ourselves to endure and surmount; that we so convincingly demonstrated last year.

Let us move forward in optimistic solidarity, working relentlessly to rebuild our country from adversity to prosperity.

A happy, happy New Year to one and all.

God bless you.

God bless, our beautiful twin island state.