

**Mr Griffiths, Mr Shilling, Premier,  
Distinguished Ladies & Gentlemen**

**First, and above all, Welcome. It is a real honour for us here in Bermuda that you have come here. This may be a small island. But it has had over several generations an important role, among other things, in using its mid-Atlantic location as a bridge for Transatlantic conferences on serious issues, from the meeting of Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Truman in 1945 onwards. That Transatlantic bridge is in evidence again this week, with this Conference. And this time the bridge has gone right round the world, with participants from 42 countries and observers from more.**

**It is a small island, and a spectacularly beautiful island, as I hope your impressively packed schedule will let you see at some stage. But despite its remoteness and size it is very connected to the rest of the world for good - we are one of the top insurance, and especially re-insurance, centers in the world - but we share some of the bad things too. Bermuda is definitely not spared the scourge of abuse against children. We have as much interest as any part of the world in constantly improving our child safeguarding regimes and our measures against crimes against children.**

**Over the 31 previous meetings of this Group, I am aware that it has grown in size and in the number of countries taking part.**

**It will also have grown, to an even greater extent, in the scope of the issues it has to look at. To headline just three:**

**I noticed that on Friday Dr Cooper of the University of North Carolina will speak on the increasing overlaps of different types of child sexual exploitation. I am sure some of these will be types only identified since this Group's first meeting.**

**Others will only have begun to happen at all during that time frame. There is a new realization over recent decades of the many types of crime against children:**

**- sexual exploitation is obviously not new, but it now has taken on new forms.**

**- economic exploitation is definitely not new, but the world is more aware of it. And it has acquired a new international angle in the form of trafficking.**

**- neglect, and violence against children within the home; and bullying in schools, all of which I think people have become more aware of.**

**- and systematic abuses in conflicts.**

**Secondly, the scope of your work has been changed by technology. I know that many of you will have used the opportunities on offer yesterday to update yourselves with the new technology which must ceaselessly be developed to let you try to stay ahead – and to link with each other to do so.**

**But the technology itself has created new forms of crime against children, perhaps to a greater degree than in other forms of crime. There is not just the explosion in child pornography, where the internet has given vast new opportunities for abuse. But areas like cyber-bullying, where the extent of abuse is only just becoming apparent, have produced new ways in which victims can be made miserable and in some cases have their lives ruined. This is something where children are particularly vulnerable and which presents a challenge to legislators as much as to law enforcers.**

**And third and last, the scope of your work has changed by the belated awareness of the non-stereotypic nature of many of these crimes, particularly to do with sexual abuse. Perhaps this has come as less of a surprise to police officers, but I think it has been a shock to the wider public, who had thought that these**

**offences resulted from the weakness or cruelty of certain types of individual. It is now clear that the most surprising institutions and that every kind of person - rich or poor, old or young, stable or chaotic - can be perpetrators, or victims.**

**In respect of the sexual abuse of children, I would like to take this opportunity strongly to make one plea. That is, to commend you to encourage members of the general public - especially anyone involved in working professionally or voluntarily with young people, but so far as possible everyone else too - to go on the growing number of good courses on child protection and awareness of abuse. There are many good reasons to do this: to improve the identification of children who may be subject to abuse and thereby to protect them. But there can also be an element of sensible self-interest on the part of organisations, who may be able to reduce risks potentially affecting their very existence, by making abuse less likely to happen or spotting it if it does.**

**These are weighty matters which you are here to discuss. They go to the roots of our society. Many must be disturbing even to experienced practitioners. They touch on social and personal issues, morality, high technology used for low purposes, the ugliest forms of gratification and straight old fashioned acquisitive crime. You have not taken on an easy task. But I hope here in Bermuda you will combine important professional development with enough relaxation to take away good memories of a spectacular place - and perhaps a realisable plan to come back somehow, some time.**

**I wish you all well in your vitally important work. And I have the honour now to declare the Conference - Open.**