



*Permanent Mission
of Barbados to
the United Nations*



STATEMENT BY

SENATOR THE HON. MAXINE MCCLEAN
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
FOREIGN TRADE
BARBADOS

TO THE

GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE
64TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SEPTEMBER 28, 2009

United Nations Headquarters
New York

Please check against delivery

Mr. President,

On behalf of my delegation, I am pleased to join the speakers who have preceded me in congratulating you on your election to the Presidency of the 64th General Assembly. You can be assured of the full support and cooperation of Barbados as you carry out your important duties. I wish also to take this opportunity to express appreciation to your predecessor, H.E. Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for his leadership of the 63rd Session.

Mr. President,

We meet at a pivotal moment in the history of the United Nations. Never since the founding of this Organisation, has our community of nations been tested by the confluence of so many devastating crises as we have witnessed in the recent past. It is therefore with a sense of honour, fully recognising the responsibility entrusted to me and to all of us here, that I address this General Assembly for the first time in my capacity as Minister responsible for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados.

Barbados commends you Mr. President for the choice of theme for this year's General Debate, given the myriad crises that we face, and the need for effective global responses. Indeed, the world is facing major economic, political and social upheaval. The threat of food and fuel scarcity, the worst economic and financial crisis in decades, the challenge of climate change and the influenza pandemics have all assumed an international and multi-dimensional character. Together these have undermined the very foundations of our multilateral system, exacerbating already existing disparities.

The approach of the developed economies to this crisis has been to create national stimulus packages, to bail out failing industries, in short to turn to policies which address their domestic interests almost exclusively. Developing countries are suffering the brunt of the effects of the financial crisis created by greed and poor regulation in developed countries. Faced with stagnating or falling economic growth due to factors beyond our control, we are now left to deal with declining economic activity, a consequential rise in unemployment and its resulting problems, at a time when we are forced to battle increasing debt and decreasing external trade and foreign investment revenues.

While we welcome the initiatives to create rescue packages for the least developed countries (LDCs), there is a clearly demonstrated need to expand these initiatives to include a wider group of developing countries. Barbados is one of a small group classified as small highly indebted middle income countries, which has been overlooked, but which is deserving of international attention and assistance from both bilateral partners and the multilateral institutions. As we discuss the effects of the global crises and propose assistance for affected countries, there is need to ensure that countries like Barbados are recognised within the broad category of small vulnerable economies.

Multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, have established through empirical research and their ongoing interventions that these countries are unique in the openness of their economies and in their susceptibility to external shocks. However, this grouping continues to be excluded from concessionary financing and debt relief. Focus continues to be placed on per capita income data, which is a poor indicator of economic sustainability, and national vulnerability. Our countries are in need of adequate support mechanisms with revised eligibility criteria, in order to prevent the derailment of our development processes.

This crisis presents an opportunity for the developed economies and the international financial institutions to address the existing failures and shortcomings of the current financial system. The time is right for the crafting of a new, more transparent architecture, which is supportive of development objectives.

Barbados for its part is extremely proud that, despite its handicaps, it has managed through good governance and the observance of democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law, to provide an adequate standard of living for its people. However, this does not negate our inherent vulnerabilities, our limited resources nor our restricted capacity to respond to the vagaries of the economic environment.

Mr. President,

One of the major positive consequences of the current crisis is the increase in south-south cooperation, which has played a quiet but important role over the years in promoting trade and investment among developing countries. This has served to enhance the value of such cooperation and presents great potential for future growth and development.

At the national level an important lesson learnt is that development requires the active involvement of communities, the public and private sectors and civil society. This has been clearly demonstrated in the implementation of our Social Partnership Agreements, a strategy that has been very successful in the Barbadian context since the early 1990s and has been used as a model in other developing countries.

Mr. President,

Recent world events have highlighted the importance of a multilateral approach to global problem-solving. The United Nations is perhaps the institution best suited to the task of mobilising global responses. Regrettably, over the past year the United Nations has been relegated to a subordinate role in the search for solutions to the ongoing economic and financial crisis.

Barbados will not be complicit in any effort to marginalise the United Nations, which has a unique and legitimate role in global economic decision making and rule setting. We will not join the sceptics in questioning the relevance or legitimacy of this vital multilateral organisation. However, we will continue to be at the forefront of calls for its reform to ensure that it is fully equipped and empowered to assist member states in confronting global challenges.

To date efforts to reform the United Nations have been piecemeal in nature, largely uncoordinated and at times even conflicting. The extraordinary challenges we face demand comprehensive reform. This will require a level of transformation that equips the United Nations for the 21st Century. In this session priority needs to be given to securing commitment at the highest level to finalising the reform agenda.

Mr. President,

Security Council reform must be prioritised if effective change within the United Nations system is to be achieved. It is evident that the structure, composition and working methods of the Security Council fail to reflect current global realities. Barbados believes that the membership of the Security Council should be expanded in both permanent and non-permanent categories. Our goal must be to ensure that the Council is more representative, democratic and accountable to the full membership of the United Nations without placing its effectiveness in jeopardy.

Mr. President,

The reality of global interdependence is that our destinies are inextricably linked. We cannot retreat to isolationism nor radicalism. We must with a sense of urgency and purpose, create the multilateral infrastructure necessary to manage a complex and interdependent world. This new quest for a better and more effective multilateralism must be shared by all. Our collective effort must also seek to restore the role for the United Nations envisaged by its founders - *“To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations....”*

In his address to the 63rd session of the General Assembly, the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Honourable David Thompson, reaffirmed his belief in *“...the positive role that small states can play in advancing the cause of international peace and equitable economic and social development,”* and emphasised the importance of building of *“an international system that operates on the principle of multilateralism and that respects the sovereign equality of states and the tenets of genuine non-alignment.”*

Barbados is concerned over the growing tendency of limited membership groups to assume decision-making powers on issues affecting the entire international community, without the consent or involvement of that community. We stand to squander the opportunities for creating a fair and more equitable system of global governance if responsibility for rule and decision-making remains vested in limited membership groupings, which are accountable only unto

themselves. No exclusive group of countries - no matter how big, powerful or rich - have a monopoly on solutions.

Mr President,

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Climate Convention and the International Criminal Court were all championed by some of the smallest members of the United Nations and represent just a few examples of the invaluable contribution that small states have made to strengthening multilateralism and providing solutions to complex global problems. Small states can be effective partners in the search for global solutions to the ongoing crises and these countries must have a seat at the table when decisions are being made on issues of global concern.

In this regard Mr. President, the targeting of small offshore jurisdictions in the wake of the global financial crisis, under the pretext that these jurisdictions in some way contributed to the crisis, represents an injustice worthy of the strongest possible condemnation. For those who would wish to re-write history, we must recall that the financial crisis had its origins in the developed world and resulted from excessive risk taking, corruption, fraud and ineffective regulatory controls and oversight in these countries.

Barbados fully supports the proposal from the member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), to build upon the existing programme already in place in the United Nations to address issues related to international financial services. Specifically, we call for the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation on Tax Matters to be transformed into an intergovernmental subsidiary body of the ECOSOC. The central goal of the proposed Intergovernmental Committee would be to give developing countries an effective voice when issues of cooperation on tax matters are being decided by the international community.

Mr. President,

Small democratic states like my own are convinced of the need to ensure adherence to the rule of law, and respect for constitutional norms. We are therefore compelled to register our deep concern at any interruption of the constitutional order of any sovereign state, and the dangerous precedent this could create if left unchallenged by the international community. Barbados fully supports the position of CARICOM and the Organisation of American States which call for the immediate reinstatement to office of the legally elected President of Honduras.

Barbados is equally concerned to ensure, that in our hemisphere, the relics of a past cold war era give way to a new spirit of regional partnership, in which diverse political systems can coexist in harmony. We are therefore heartened by the positive developments in respect of the reintegration of our sister Republic of Cuba into the mainstream of hemispheric affairs. We are hopeful that the renewed dialogue between the United States and Cuba will lead in the near future to the complete removal of the embargo and the normalisation of relations between them.

Barbados welcomes the support provided by the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission, MINUSTAH, which has been a vital tool for capacity building in Haiti in the key areas of governance, the strengthening of the rule of law, and human rights. We therefore call upon the Security Council to extend the mandate of MINUSTAH so that the international community can continue to provide support to the people of Haiti in their quest for sustainable peace and development.

Mr. President,

As a small island, Barbados is aware of the grave dangers posed by climate change. The damage done to our coast line and coral reefs illustrate the potential threats that flow from the phenomenon of global warming. Such threats are not peculiar to Barbados, but are posed in myriad ways to nations across the globe, both developed and developing.

In three months we will meet in Copenhagen to decide on a course of action to address this global threat of unprecedented proportions. We know the catastrophic consequences of failure to reduce global Green House Gas Emissions. What is required is a massive transformation of the way energy is generated and used to propel economic growth and development.

In Barbados we have committed to reducing our dependence on imported oil and significantly increasing our use of renewable energy. We have further identified as a national priority transitioning to a green economy. Towards the achievement of this goal we have established a number of key milestones and indicators to assess progress. We have undertaken these activities with minimal support from the international community and have utilised our own resources. We have been forced to divert an increased share of our national budget to finance adaptation measures. According to World Bank estimates, the total annual impact of potential climate change on all CARICOM countries is approximated at US\$ 9.9 billion a year or around 11.3% of total annual GDP of all CARICOM member states and associate members.

There is a moral and ethical responsibility for the international community to support urgent and ambitious global action to provide adaptation funding for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). In the Caribbean our ability to address climate change has been severely hampered by the effects of the global financial and economic crisis. An essential measure of success at Copenhagen therefore will be the extent to which the decisions we take serve to ensure the survival and continued viability of SIDS.

Mr. President,

Before closing, permit me to seek the support of this General Assembly on an issue that has emerged as a crucial health challenge for many countries, including those of the Caribbean. Chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have become one of the major causes of morbidity.

We believe that this issue must be included in the global discussions on development. We therefore support the call made by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago for a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on this issue.

Finally Mr. President, in these difficult times, we have a number of challenging issues before us for our consideration. Despite our various agendas and differing priorities, we do share an ultimate common goal: to achieve peace, security and development for all the peoples of the world. Until this becomes a reality, no country is truly secure.

I reaffirm Barbados' commitment to working with other member states to attain this goal.

I thank you.