



Antigua and Barbuda

Address by
The Honourable Prime Minister
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Baldwin Spencer

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Your Excellency Dr. Ali Treki, President of the Sixty-fourth Session of the General Assembly, on behalf of my government and the people of Antigua and Barbuda I congratulate you on your election to preside over this session and wish your every success during your tenure.

I also extend heartfelt congratulations to Father Miquel D'Escoto Brockman for his visionary and inspiring leadership over the last year.

Honourable Heads of State and Government;
Honourable Ministers;
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

"We are all members of one body. The welfare of the weakest and the welfare of the most powerful are inseparably bound together. Industry cannot flourish if labour languish. Transportation cannot prosper if manufactures decline. The general welfare cannot be provided for in any one act, but is well to remember that the benefit of one is the benefit of all, and the neglect of one is the neglect of all."

These words are taken from a 1920 speech by Calvin Coolidge. However, as we gather as a community of nations almost a century later, they are just as timely. Our common humanity is being tested by the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Additional challenges which currently confront us include the increased incidence and impact of pandemic diseases, worsening poverty and hunger that trap millions around the globe, the adverse consequences of climate change, tensions over peace and security and increasing environmental degradation.

When history is recorded, our success as leaders will be determined by our stewardship during these turbulent times.

Mr. President, years ago, in much warmer and gentler climes, small island nations like our twin island nation of Antigua and Barbuda convened a Global Conference entitled: Small Islands, Big Issues. Today we remain Small Islands but the issues with which we grapple are gargantuan. In many cases, they have been exacerbated by ill-conceived or ineffective interventions and structures. There is none among us who is immune to the financial insecurity brought about by global banking mismanagement and fraud. At the same time global climate change threatens to overwhelm the very fabric of our small nations.

Mr. President, it has been said that the rising tide of globalization floats all boats on a sea of economic opportunities. What is now clear is that such tides can turn into an economic tsunami that can wash away in one swift wave, development gains that took decades to be realized. This is the situation in which Antigua and Barbuda now finds itself. An unwelcome visitor in the form of this global economic crisis has thrust itself upon our pristine shores and is threatening to wreak untold damage on our economies.

So, while some members of our community of nations have begun to tout faint but hopeful signs of recovery, prudence dictates that we pay heed to the words of Calvin Coolidge and acknowledge that it simply is not an option to adopt an insular approach in responding to this global crisis. The stronger economies must remain ever cognizant of the fact that the *welfare of the weakest and the welfare of the most powerful are inseparably bound together*.

Meeting the challenges of the economic and financial crisis

Mr. President, in responding to the crisis, all parties must admit that the old methodologies as reflected in the Washington Consensus and similar models are obsolete. As we actively pursue the creation of new structures and strategies, Antigua and Barbuda encourages the Community of Nations to explore alternative models such as that represented by the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA). With its foundation principles of **complementarity** as an alternative to competition; **solidarity** as opposed to domination; **cooperation** as a replacement for exploitation; and **respect for sovereignty** rather than corporate rule, ALBA represents an innovative and viable model of integration and development.

Antigua and Barbuda along with many of our CARICOM brothers and sisters welcome the paradigm shift which now characterizes engagement with agencies such as the International Monetary Fund. The decision to limit conditionalities to those critical to achieving the objectives of the country programme being supported, and the commitment to play a more supportive role and allow the objectives to be set by the borrowing country, are welcome responses to earlier calls to recognize the absolute necessity of using factors other than per capita GDP as a criteria to access concessionary financing. We maintain that herein lies the key to mitigating a downward spiral into economic and social chaos.

Mr. President, decision making on issues of international financial governance remains a privilege of the few when such decisions have great

impact on the lives, livelihood and basic well-being of millions of people the world over.

My government calls on the developed countries, the members of the OECD, to ensure that their response strategies involve better international cooperation on tax issues through inclusive and cooperative frameworks that ensure the involvement and equal treatment of small jurisdictions, as stipulated in the outcome document of the UN Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis.

The outcome document is a welcome one, and I applaud the President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly for giving voice to the G-192, including the developing countries and those most vulnerable. The genesis of the crisis lies in the capitals of the developed world, but its effects are global, and the response must be truly global.

In this regard I urge the Assembly, through the Ad Hoc Working Group, to follow-up on the outcome of the conference to take an inclusive approach to allow for participation of those who are not members of the exclusive G8 and G20 clubs. Again drawing on the words of Coolidge, I point out that *the general welfare cannot be provided for in any one act* – and I would add by any single, small subset of the Community of Nations seeking to unilaterally reshape the global economic and financial architecture.

It is in our power to change the operating principles of global capitalism such that economic prosperity is shared equally among countries and within countries. Drastic change is needed in theory and practice, in economic assumptions and in the institutions of governance. It's the sustainable path to development and a challenge to which this assembly of nations and leaders must rise.

Enhancing development partnerships through South-South Cooperation

Mr. President, meeting transnational and global threats and challenges to development requires international cooperation. As previously stated, traditional western-based modalities of development cooperation in which partners are not considered equals, have failed us. A paradigm shift is not optional; it is imperative.

My government firmly believes in promoting partnerships in support of sustainable development based on principles of mutual respect and understanding, equality and a genuine desire to effect social and economic development of all. I have already alluded to my country's membership in

ALBA and commended that innovative model of integration and development.

Antigua and Barbuda also looks forward to fully playing its role in ensuring that the various trade arrangements entered into with the European Union, the United States of America and Canada work in the interest of all of our nations. My government however, will continue to place a strong emphasis on the developmental components, which should be central to ensuring that these arrangements produce positive results for our people.

At the same time we have deepened our integration efforts with our CARICOM brothers and sisters, focussing on fully implementing the CSME as well as deepening the various sub-regional regulatory frameworks. As a part of the smaller OECS grouping, Antigua and Barbuda fully supports an OECS Economic Union in an effort to build on the shared tradition of our sub-regional integration arrangements and to expand the areas of shared sovereignty in order to survive and ultimately thrive.

Mr. President, as a member of the CARICOM family, Antigua and Barbuda is proud of its long standing relationship with the Republic of Cuba. It is my government's firm belief that the discriminatory and punitive policies and practices which serve to prevent Cuba from exercising its right to freely participate in the affairs of the hemisphere must be discontinued and with immediate effect. While the winds of change continue to move across the United States, I call on the Obama Administration to effect change in its dealings with our sister nation of the Republic of Cuba.

I call on the United States to end unequivocally the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on our brothers and sisters in Cuba. As a world leader and defender of justice, the United States must embrace change fully in the interest of the men, women and children of Cuba.

Meeting the challenges of sustainable development

Mr. President, it is worth reiterating that the parallels between the global economic crisis and the global climate change crisis are both stark and dire for Small Island Developing States. Again we are faced with the adverse impacts of a crisis that is not of our making but which is threatening – quite literally in the case of some of our sister nations in the Pacific – to wipe us away from the face of the earth!

It is a recognized fact, but it is worth repeating – Small Island States contribute the least to the causes of climate change, yet we suffer the most from its effects.

At the Summit of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) held earlier this week, my country joined with other island-states in sending a strong message to the international community on the need for bold and ambitious actions.

Small Island States have expressed our profound disappointment at the lack of tangible action within the UNFCCC negotiations to protect SIDS and other vulnerable countries, our peoples, culture, land and eco-systems. The responsibility for mitigating climate change is a common responsibility for all nations, be they developed or developing. However, developed countries should shoulder their moral, ethical and historical responsibilities for emitting the levels of anthropogenic greenhouse gases (GHGs) into the atmosphere. It is those actions which have now put the planet in jeopardy and compromised the well-being of present and future generations.

Antigua and Barbuda, therefore, fully supports our sister nation of the Peoples Republic of China in its call for developed countries to take up their responsibility to provide new, additional, adequate and predictable financial support to developing countries which in effect, represents a joint investment in the future of mankind.

At this pivotal point of the climate change negotiations which will culminate in December, Antigua and Barbuda also anxiously awaits an international agreement to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A Small Island Nation like ours which is highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, including sea level rise, coral bleaching, more frequent and intense hurricanes, understands that our fate, our very existence, hangs on the outcome of such an agreement. We wait with bated breaths and hope that humanity will show itself worthy of this planet and that nations will have the political will and integrity of leadership to solve the most confounding challenge of our era.

Mr. President, the effects of climate change have forcibly brought home the absolute necessity for better disaster preparedness management and risk reduction. This is clearly illustrated by several very active hurricane seasons in recent history. Cognizant of this, my government has upgraded our disaster management capabilities, including strengthening the national disaster office; constructing hurricane shelters; and enhancing community resilience.

In the spirit of cooperation and solidarity, we look forward to having our development partners make available the necessary resources to enable us to implement our national adaptation plans and programs. By so doing, they will help to address the adverse effects of climate change that we, the most vulnerable countries, are already experiencing. We urge them to view this as a top most priority and moral imperative.

Gender and development

Mr. President, gender equality and women's empowerment remains a centrepiece of the national development strategy of Antigua and Barbuda. Having achieved universal primary education, we are proud that our young males and females continue to enjoy equal access and opportunity to education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Further, with a growing number of female parliamentarians plus key high-level political positions occupied by women, we continue to improve on our record of female empowerment. The advocacy work of the UN System on gender issues has been instrumental to the progress we've made thus far, and we look forward to the continuing support as we continue to break down the traditional barriers to the active participation of more than fifty percent of our country's human capital.

Small arms control, crime prevention and drug trafficking

Mr. President, transnational crime has burdened our societies with social and financial costs that we cannot afford to bear. Crime prevention and small arms control is a priority for my government. Our geography has placed us at a major trans-shipment point for transnational organized crime networks, trafficking in arms and narcotics.

In recent years the level of gun violence and gun related crimes has escalated significantly, placing further pressure on an already fragile economy. This has led to insecurity, fear and loss of life in our societies, hampering our development efforts and threatening the general peace and stability of the region. We need greater cooperation from countries as well as the support of the UN system to eliminate this threat to hemispheric and international peace and security.

Antigua and Barbuda is in full support of a legally binding Arms Trade Treaty that will prevent the illegal international transfer of arms and which

will govern the trade in conventional arms according to common international standards.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation

Mr. President, as a peace-loving nation Antigua and Barbuda is also concerned by the lack of progress in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We remain steadfast in our commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons.

The threat posed by non-state actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction is shared by all countries, large and small. For this reason we support the extension of the mandate of Security Council resolution 1540. Pursuant to our obligations under this resolution, we are pleased to have submitted the relevant reports to the respective Security Council Committees.

Mr. President, the transshipment of nuclear waste through the waters of the Caribbean also remains a critical issue. The risk of an accident or a terrorist attack on one of these shipments poses a grave threat to the environmental and economic sustainability of the region. Heads of Government of CARICOM and of the wider Association of Caribbean States (ACS) have consistently called for a total cessation of these shipments in our waters, and we reiterate our strenuous and forceful rejection of the continued use of the Caribbean Sea for the transshipment of nuclear and other hazardous waste material.

Finally Mr. President, distinguished leaders, as Caribbean people of African descent, our past is clouded by the dark days of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, however with steady hands, committed minds and innovative plans, a bright future looms with the sunrise. We must ensure that we develop programmes to educate and inculcate in future generations an understanding of the lessons, history and consequences of slavery and the slave trade. We must not forget! We must encourage continued action in this regard.

Antigua and Barbuda looks forward to the erection of a Permanent Memorial to the victims of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery, an initiative being championed by CARICOM. We look forward also to the commencement of serious dialogue on the issue of reparations.

Mr. President, in conclusion, it is very clear that the multiple and multifaceted nature of the global threats and challenges we face will test the abilities of this august assembly of nations and its leaders.

Is the United Nations up to the task? Will we – both individually and collectively – heed the admonition of Calvin Coolidge and demonstrate in both word and deed a firm conviction that *the welfare of the weakest and the welfare of the most powerful are inseparably bound together*? For us, a small island but with big aspirations and dreams for the future of our people, we remain hopeful that we will all find the political will and ability to rise to the task.

Thank you.