



**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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**PRIME MINISTER**

**AND**

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**OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA**

**AT THE**

**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE SIXTH-FIFTH SESSION**

**OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**(check against delivery)**

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Mr. President,  
Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me at the outset commend you, Mr. President, on your unanimous election as President of the 65<sup>th</sup> session of our United Nations.

I pledge my delegation's support for your efforts to successfully move forward the agenda of this session.

I also wish to commend your predecessor, Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, President of the 64<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly for his stewardship, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, for his leadership of the UN secretariat.

Mr. President,

Your choice of the theme for our general debate, namely, "reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance," is both appropriate and timely.

After 65 years of operations, there is sufficient history to provide material for objective review, and enough future to justify such a rigorous assessment.

In my own view, arising from the many successes of the United Nations in a wide range of areas, one of the most enduring lessons the past 65 years have taught us as a global community, is the wisdom and supremacy of multilateralism.

Mr. President,

Even where multilateralism has failed to secure lasting solutions to some of the world's problems, it has laid unshakable foundations on which bilateral understanding can be built.

Resolution of the conflict in the Middle East, for example, has long eluded the international community. This is why we are hopeful that the latest efforts at peaceful negotiations between Israel and Palestine, being brokered by the current United States Administration.

If there is to be lasting peace in the Middle East:

There must be two states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security.

There must be direct negotiations, with both parties, Israel and Palestine, at the same table.

Israel must heed the international community's unanimous call to extend the moratorium on disputed settlements, which would contribute positively to the negotiations.

And all the countries of that region must commit and work towards a lasting and durable Middle East peace.

Distinguished delegates,

Today global governance relates not only to concerns about peace, security and self political determination. Importantly, global governance embraces such imperatives as the elimination of hunger, disease and ignorance; as well as administering a stable and robust international financial system; ensuring fair trade, adequate shelter and the preservation of our very delicate environment.

Never in the history of human existence has our planet been faced with a greater urgency to meet these objectives.

The scale of poverty, conflicts, global warming, the economic and financial crisis, migration, pandemics, terrorism and international crime, demands a collective global effort employing common and coordinated strategies. The extent of these problems and the enormity of their consequences are clearly beyond the resource and management capabilities of any one nation.

I believe that our United Nations, with its near universal membership, is the only global body that has the legitimacy and operational structures to undertake the task of forging the necessary political and economic consensus to effectively tackle these problems.

Mr. President,

A mere three years ago, we heads of government described climate change as the “defining challenge” of our era.

Three years on, it remains so, especially for those countries that are particularly vulnerable.

And yet we hear from some who have a responsibility to act, that they will only do so when others have taken action. While everybody waits for somebody else to act, the peoples of the world are made to suffer.

If ever a challenge requires an urgent global solution, this one does.

Distinguished delegates,

Small Island Developing States such as Antigua and Barbuda, face a unique set of vulnerabilities related to our small size, relative isolation, narrow resource base, and high exposure to global environmental threats.

To compound this, over the last five years we have suffered disproportionately from the financial, food and energy crises. Our economies have been battered and many of our productive sectors wiped out.

But the hardship that has ensued for our people from all this, will pale into insignificance if the international community does not quickly address the looming threat of climate change, which is already having a devastating impact all over the world.

We, the small island developing States, have already experienced loss of agricultural land and infrastructure – so too has many countries in Africa.

Our fishing and tourism industries are being impacted negatively.

There has been considerable loss of our biodiversity, saltwater intrusion, and devastation of terrestrial and wetland habitats and the destruction of human settlements.

Even the once-distant threat of rising sea-levels is now a reality, forcing some of our people to emigrate and rebuild their lives elsewhere.

The most notable action, so far, has been repeated promises of abundant financing to address the most urgent problems. Sadly most of these remain just that: promises.

There are too many commitments to undertake aggressive greenhouse gas emissions reductions with the caveat of, “only if others do so as well”. This approach has created a dangerous stalemate that can only be to the further detriment of Small Island Developing States such as my own.

Not willing to allow this dangerous situation to continue forever, my own country of Antigua and Barbuda has pledged to reduce its already miniscule greenhouse gas emissions by twenty-five percent below 1990 levels by 2020.

This, Mr. President, is within the range specified by the IPCC, which has recommended that overall reductions should be within the range of 25% to 40% below 1990 levels by 2020.

We have also declared that we will move to a green economy by 2020.

However, much remains to be done and we are painfully aware that we cannot do it alone.

I therefore call on ALL countries, both developed and developing, to join us in this endeavour by announcing real, meaningful emission reductions targets, so that we can move this seemingly endless debate forward and reach a comprehensive, binding agreement in the very near future.

Mr. President,

The year 2010 has not been without its share of catastrophes.

The year began with a devastating earthquake in Haiti – one of the worst disasters in history. The death toll has been put at 220,000 of a population of around 9 million. The earthquake is estimated to cost \$8 to \$14 billion, according to the Inter-American Development Bank.

Against this backdrop, many countries pledged assistance – up to US \$1.5 billion. Sadly, only 10% of the amount pledged has been received by Haiti. In the midst of these unfulfilled commitments, the humanitarian needs of our sister island remain dire.

Since charity begins at home, we, the member States of the Caribbean Community, of which Haiti is a member, have been contributing, within our limited capacity, our fair share of assistance to Haiti, including direct budgetary support.

I call on those nations which pledged assistance to Haiti, to honour their commitments. Those pledges are needed urgently now that the rebuilding phase is getting underway in that devastated country.

Distinguished delegates,

In Chile a huge earthquake moved the city of Concepción at least 10 feet (or 3 meters) to the west. Between 500 and 700 persons were killed. Total recovery costs could exceed \$15 billion. In the People's Republic of China, a series of snowstorms and freezing weather have affected the western region of country since December 2009. The storms have affected millions and resulted in 30 deaths.

This year alone, severe flooding and a major earthquake killed hundreds of people and rendered thousands more homeless.

In Pakistan devastating floods have resulted in over 1600 deaths and more than six million people have being affected. That country has sought international assistance to cope with the catastrophe. Despite mass evacuations, there are fears that the death toll will rise as flooding reaches the southern parts of the country and the risk of an outbreak of water-borne diseases increases in many areas.

These disasters and their aftermaths serve to reaffirm the need to ensure that addressing the humanitarian consequences of today's disasters and emergencies remain a United Nations priority. And those countries in a position to do so should pledge their support to assist Pakistan and to honour their pledges.

Antigua and Barbuda continues to commiserate with the governments and people of these and other nations, who have been affected by natural and other disasters.

Mr. President,

In my region of Latin America and the Caribbean, our governments are taking bold steps to overcome some of our inherent economic and social vulnerabilities by forging economic partnership designed to help lift our people out of poverty.

The single market and economy being built at the level of the 15 member Caribbean Community is one such valiant initiative.

At the sub-regional level of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), economic integration is proceeding at an even more rapid pace with our commitment to creating an economic union by next year.

An economic union will transform our sub-region into a single economic space with free movement of labour, free movement of goods and trade in services, free movement of capital, and harmonized fiscal and monetary policies ahead of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

Mr. President, as you know already our sub-region shares a common currency, central bank and legal system as well as common export development and civil aviation agencies.

Along with economic union, we will also create a Regional Assembly of Parliamentarians and a restructured OECS Commission.

Distinguished delegates,

Both the CARICOM Single Market and Economy as well as the OECS Economic Union are enormous undertakings by small island nations with very limited resources. We therefore invite the support of our development partners to assist us with the technical and financial resources necessary to move these economic initiatives forward.

The leaders of our region see the building of strong economic alliances as being vital to the creation of wealth and prosperity for our people. We are convinced that the capacity of our national governments to deliver critical social services for our populations can be improved through greater economic and technical cooperation at the regional level.

It is for that reason, and with the interest of our people in mind, that the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean agreed at our meeting in Mexico earlier this year, to create the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which will unite members of the Rio Group and the Caribbean Community.

This Community of nations will coexist with the Organisation of American States (OAS), which we share with our North American partners.

Mr. President,

The economic challenges facing all the people of our hemisphere are too many, and their implications too grave, for us to contemplate the creation of any economic community of Latin America and the Caribbean that excludes any one country of our region.

It is in that spirit, that Cuba remains, and will always remain, a vibrant participant in any broad economic arrangement for Latin America and the Caribbean. We may not all share similar political views and political systems. However, the right of all the people of Latin America and the Caribbean to an equal chance at survival, economic development and social advancement, is absolute and nonnegotiable.

For that reason the governments and people of Latin America and the Caribbean continue to regard as unjust, counter productive and reprehensible, the maintenance of the ongoing economic embargo against Cuba. As a political strategy or economic manoeuvre, this act of economic strangulation is unjustifiable.

We condemn this embargo in the strongest possible terms as its continued enforcement by the United States severely hampers the development of Cuba and its people.

Antigua and Barbuda therefore reiterates our call for the United States to immediately end its economic embargo against the Cuban people.

Distinguished delegates,

More than twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, democracy has emerged as THE preferred form of government all over the world. And people everywhere have strongly opposed attempts to seize governments – any government – through undemocratic means. Such attempts, whenever and where ever they occur must be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

We therefore condemn the anti-democratic moves, such as the recent coup d'etat in Honduras, and call for the unconditional return of former President Zelaya without harm to his physical person or further threats to his tenure.

This is sine quo non for the full normalization of relations between Honduras and most of the countries of the region.

Mr. President,

As I said in my statement on review of the Millennium Development Goals, a renewed emphasis on trade is a critical pillar on which developing countries are seeking to rescue their battered economies and lift their people up out of poverty. In this respect, it is essential that all participants in the global trading system, including our partners in the developed countries, adhere to their international obligations.

If this is not done, the people of our small developing countries, despite the encouragement of their leaders, will have no faith in the international system. They will have no reason to believe that the multilateral system is just and that it works for them in the same way it does for large, powerful, developed nations.

The non-resolution of the online gaming matter within the World Trade Organisation, despite repeated rulings in favour of Antigua and Barbuda by the Dispute Settlement Body of the WTO, is a case in point.

Let us not forget that like the United Nations, the WTO and other bodies such as the Bretton-Woods Institutions, are essential elements of the multilateral system and vital pillars of the accepted architecture of global governance.

It is in the spirit of preserving this vital architecture of global governance that Antigua and Barbuda reiterates its call for our friend and partner, the United States, to work with us to quickly resolve the situation and to arrive at a settlement that is fair and just to both parties.

Trade is a critical engine of economic growth. If for no other reason but this, we must complete the Doha Round of trade negotiations, so as to ensure a balanced outcome. Now more than ever, after some ten years in the making, Doha must lead to economic expansion, development in the poorest countries, and an end to distorting subsidies and protectionist barriers.

Mr. President.

A number of the countries classified as middle and upper-middle income nations, are in dire need of substantial amounts of debt relief to create fiscal space for spending targeted towards their development. Many of these countries now have debt-servicing obligations that are comparable in size to their GNP or, in some cases, dwarf the value of their total output.

For them, my own country included, the need for urgent debt relief is a top priority. For many of those countries the debt distress has been caused by global crises not of their making.

The global financial and economic tsunami, the likes of which has not been seen since 1929, has impacted negatively on every sphere of life for about 90% of mankind.

In some instances entire national economies collapsed, commercial and private sectors have being decimated. For some the downward spiral has no end in sight.

Many countries are struggling to maintain a minimal level of normalcy. For others, staving off financial collapse, social upheaval and chaos is unravelling the very fabric of modern societies and jeopardizing sanity, sovereignty, independence, and the dignity and pride of their people.

Mr. President,

The effects of the global financial and economic crisis on the larger territories of Caribbean Community, is evident in their economic, fiscal, and social statistical data. For the smaller territories of the Eastern Caribbean, the situation is even more devastating.

Permit me to relate these facts pertaining to my own country Antigua and Barbuda.

In addition to the direct and indirect impact which the global economic contagion has had on our economy, we have had to endure the collapse of two of the leading Insurance companies, which not only held normal policies, but annuities and life savings for individuals, and large cash investments for national statutory corporation totaling approximately US\$150 million.

At the same time there has been the collapse of the leading private sector employer and the second largest employer in the nation after my government.

All this was added to a financial sector, which has been suffering from a sustained campaign by the Organisation for Economic Development (OECD) to reduce competition in taxation, an area into which we had diversified our economy, which was previously dependent almost entirely on tourism. This action by the OECD resulted in the loss of hundreds of the most lucrative jobs, and an estimated loss of hundreds of millions in direct revenue from our economy.

We note the recent removal of Antigua and Barbuda from the so-called grey list. Our current listing among the countries that have substantially implemented internationally agreed taxation standards, is a belated recognition of the steps taken by the current Government of Antigua and Barbuda, over several years, to be in full compliance with all international standards in this respect.

In light of these realities of substantial revenue decline and severe economic dislocation, Antigua & Barbuda recently engaged the Paris Club in discussions on our country's US\$133 outstanding to that group of creditors. Our engagement with the Paris Club was assisted by a stand By Arrangement previously approved by the International Monetary Fund.

We have arrived at an agreement that will see some 90 per cent of this debt being restructured. Our next step will be to enter bilateral negotiations with Paris Club member creditors.

With the economic challenges I have outlined our Human Development needs are severely strained and challenged in unprecedented ways.

This makes our attainment of the Millennium Goals though possible, extremely difficult without a more realistic and flexible direct commitment from our development partners.

I therefore call on the G7, the G20, the IMF and the World Bank, in their bilateral and multi-lateral commitments to the Caribbean, to give a more compassionate and favorable response to



the New Arrangement to Borrow (NAB), with specific focus on the Group of 20 agreement of April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010.

This agreement was to “triple the Fund’s lending capacity to \$750 billion.” This approach has already been taken with some other regions and nations. The institutions are being called on too, to accord to our region, consideration of broader and more comprehensive debt cancellation to spur economic revival, and in some cases, survival.

Mr. President,

The General Assembly meets once again as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. We meet in this unique forum that bestows equality on each of the 192 Members, to engage in multilateral discussions to advance the interests of all our peoples of the world.

But reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance cannot be done without due regard to the myriad challenges facing all its members.

For us to achieve that reaffirmation, which most, if not all of us believe is a very noble objective, I believe we must act now.

I therefore call on this session of the Assembly to develop the modalities that will enable our United Nations to be able to:

Resolve conflicts and promote peace and stability;

Foster a more prosperous world through balanced growth and prosperity among developed and developing countries;

Encourage all its member States to pursue a cleaner, greener, more sustainable world for our children

Create a safer world, free of nuclear weapons.

The 65 year history of this noble institution establishes beyond a doubt that we can. And the future of our generation and generations of our people to come behooves us to embark on that mission with urgency and immediacy.

I thank you.