



STATEMENT

BY

**THE HONOURABLE WILFRED P. ELRINGTON
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND FOREIGN TRADE**

AT THE

**GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE
SIXTY-FIFTH SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

29 SEPTEMBER 2010

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**PERMANENT MISSION OF BELIZE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

Mr. President,

I congratulate you on behalf of the Belize delegation on your election to the Presidency of the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

As much as our peoples share common values of peace and democracy, your country and my own could not be more different –

Switzerland is landlocked with a land mass twice the size, and a population twenty-five times that of my coastal country.

Belize is a one billion dollar economy and Switzerland's is a 400,000 billion dollars economy. Nominal GDP per capita in Switzerland is estimated at 67,000 dollars while in Belize that figure is roughly 4,000 dollars.

Indeed the dramatic differences between our two countries are illustrative of the stark differences that exist in today's world.

We, in this Hall, tout sovereign equality, but we experience social and economic disparity on a daily basis, across the globe.

Inequality persists between nations and within nations. Poverty proliferates in the midst of plenty.

In my own country, although real output per capita grew over the past ten years, so did the proportion of Belizeans living in poverty. In other words, we experienced growth without commensurate development.

Belize accepts that development is a matter of national responsibility. However our contemporary reality now renders questions that were hitherto matters of national concern, matters of global concern. As a consequence of globalization, the management capacity of a state has diminished. Our macroeconomic policy and fiscal capacity can barely address the multiple exogenous shocks occasioned by the triumvirate of the financial, food and fuel crises.

Adequate and appropriate international support is critical if we are to avoid drifting further and further away from the attainment of our development goals. In that connection, developed nations should make good their promise to deliver 0.7 percent of their GDP for official development assistance.

For Belize, that international support is hard to come by because of our designation as a middle income country. While we have benefitted from ODA and FDI in our quest to further integrate Belize into the global economy, for the most part, expensive foreign and local commercial debt has fueled the country's development strategy.

In the last 15 years, Belize has built up a high level of public debt, with high-cost long-term debt. The ratio of public debt to GDP grew steadily from about 27 percent in 1995 to 70.3 percent in 2008, with a peak of 87 percent in 2005.

This debt led strategy, that was the model of many other countries, has become a burden for our children.

Debt service obligations constrain my government's capacity to increase social investments especially in those areas where they are most needed. Belize finds itself off track in meeting Millennium Development Goals for poverty, hunger, education and the empowerment of women. Considering the synergies between goals, slippage in one threatens achievement of others.

The terms of engagement between the international financial institutions and middle income countries must be revised to allow countries as my own to break away from this trend of debt led development. While those terms will necessarily have to provide for suitable risk mitigation strategies, they should not be so burdensome as to constrain our policy space. They must respect the national ownership of our development initiatives.

International cooperation and support therefore must complement rather than dictate the way forward.

While Belize's traditional donors have long provided assistance, for which we are grateful, we are benefitting from new modalities of cooperation which are yielding more direct and immediate returns for our people.

Belize's cooperation experience with Taiwan exemplifies a model of cooperation based on partnership. With the help of the Government of Taiwan, Belize has developed its capacity in agricultural research, aquaculture, education, and social sector investment.

In the Latin American and Caribbean region, cooperation has long been based on this approach. Belize has benefited from partnerships with Cuba, Brazil and Venezuela. Today the progress that we can claim in the health related MDGs is a testament to these partnerships.

Beyond our hemispheric relations, we are forging new partnerships. We recently received two years worth of emergency relief materials from the United Arab Emirates.

Through these partnerships Belize, is being enabled to pursue its broader national development objectives.

Our experience is being replicated the world over as we see in other examples of South South cooperation.

We need now to make these partnerships the standard for global cooperation.

Mr. President,

At the United Nations, we have long been focused on official development assistance as being synonymous with global partnerships. This myopic view needs to be broadened.

Let us disabuse ourselves of the donor driven dialectic.

The United Nations has the responsibility to craft a new orientation from a donor-recipient culture to one of true partnership with mutual respect.

As every speaker in this debate has reinforced, in order for this institution to meet this challenge, it must itself reform.

Current structures and organization of decision-making tend toward a North-South polarity. This dynamic imperils cooperation and renders debate more ceremony than meaningful dialogue.

Over the sixty five years of the United Nation's existence, our world has changed.

We are dealing with new realities: this organization is near universal with 192 countries represented here. The club of nuclear power states has expanded and may yet continue to expand. Global integration has deepened with technology, market liberalization, and the freer movement of capital. Our interdependence has generated global systemic risks.

We need a United Nations that reflects a more equitable North – South representation and that can effectively deliver. This means that the organs of the United Nations must be reformed. The process of decision making must ensure coherence and be inclusive. And above all equity and justice must inform our mechanisms for delivery.

The reform we seek goes much deeper than the changing of the guards. It is a reform that would rebuild trust amongst each other and confidence in the system.

Mr. President,

Belize is crafting a twenty first century vision for a modern, green and sustainable economy predicated on capacity building, human dignity, human development and innovation.

Our government is working towards building domestic capital through social investments, job creation, improved access to credit and combating crime and violence.

To this end, we have launched project *Restore Belize*, which encompasses a comprehensive anti-crime initiative together with a socio economic component aimed at restoring the social fabric of our society through provision of skills training, continuing education for adults, infrastructure development and fostering civic pride.

We have instituted school feeding programmes, subsidies for students of secondary schools, seed programmes for farmers and capitalization of our own Development Finance Corporation for onward lending to entrepreneurs.

The Government has also undertaken a national multi party multi sectoral consultative process to redefine our national development objectives in our Horizon 2030 project. In addition, the Prime Minister has established a Council of Science Advisors to better inform the Horizon 2030 process on the integration of science and technology in the national development agenda.

Mr. President,

Belize has fully embraced its responsibility for its national development. Our efforts are aimed toward ensuring that we achieve development with dignity. And for this, we seek partnerships not charity.

When we see the Belizean flag flying high in the sky, and the words of freedom and independence resound, the dreams of our forefathers come alive, and our children sing

By the might of truth and the grace of God
No longer shall we be hewers of wood,
Arise! Ye sons of the Baymen's clan,
Put on your armour, clear the land!
Drive back the tyrants, let despots flee
Land of the free by the Carib Sea!

Thank you.