



STATEMENT BY
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PRESIDENT

OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA

AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE
SIXTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE
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Mr. President,

I begin by congratulating you on your well-deserved election as President of the 65th Session of this General Assembly. Additionally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank H.E. Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki of Libya for his effective, strong and dynamic leadership of the 64th Session; and to salute Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tremendous efforts in promoting global peace, security, and development.

Mr. President,

I address this august assembly, as we confront the second decade of this millennium which brings such tremendous opportunities for mankind. Scientific and technological innovations have made the world a truly global village characterised by continuing connectivity and unimagined possibilities for facilitating global development. These technologies, integrating as they do, even the smallest and traditionally most distant countries into the day to day activities of the world community, have the potential to combat hunger, eradicate poverty, generate employment, and to elevate the standard of living of people throughout the world, without compromising the integrity of our ecosystem and planet earth.

However, in order to realize the full potential of these opportunities, the community of nations now needs to muster the courage to pursue with determination reforms in international and multilateral institutions like the United Nations, which will ensure equality of treatment, and bring the benefits of development, to those countries which, in consequence of small size are often the least endowed, and most vulnerable in today's world community.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Mr. President,

The formulation and pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has brought the world's attention to the main issues of development especially the challenges faced by developing countries. It also brought to the fore the nexus which exists between financial, social, and economic development on the one hand and the sustainable use of natural resources on the other.

By and large, we in the developing world have lived up to the commitments which we made, by mobilizing domestic financial resources for development, and making major structural changes

even in the face of an increasingly hostile economic, financial and trading system. These efforts have been coupled with international resources for development in the form of foreign direct investment and Official Development Assistance (ODA). The results to date have been encouraging when one considers where we were at the beginning of the millennium. There still remain, however, a number of unresolved global issues which have stymied the efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

We suggest, therefore, that the next five years before the target date of the MDGs must see a reconfiguration and acceleration of efforts by all Member States. This should begin with the fulfilment of commitments already given by developed countries, and South-south cooperation must be strengthened in keeping with the kind of solidarity now being demonstrated by countries like Venezuela, Cuba, China, Brazil and other such developing countries.

Negotiation of the Doha Development Round must be concluded within a reasonable time, and in that regard the very small states of the developing world must continue to insist even as others resist it, on meaningful recognition by the global community of the principle of special and differential treatment, rather than a "one size fits all" approach, as a central principle permitting beneficial economic adjustment for countries like my own. This will provide developing countries with an opportunity to compete in the global trading system and place greater emphasis on trade rather than aid.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. President,

The phenomenon of climate change has been well documented by the United Nations and other institutions over the past decade. In fact, we in the Caribbean and other Small Island Developing States (SIDS) can speak of our experience with the increasing intensity of hurricanes, droughts, floods, destruction to coastal areas and rising sea levels.

These have had severe impacts on our agriculture, tourism, and physical infrastructure especially along our coasts. This has led to an increasingly high cost for adaptation and mitigation, resulting in the diversion of funds which otherwise would have been used for social and economic development. Climate change therefore, has become a major threat to the ability of most developing countries to achieve the MDGs.

The Case for Small Island Developing States

Mr. President,

For almost two decades the United Nations has recognized the special economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States.

Since the Mauritius meeting in 2005, the situation of Small Island Developing States has become even more precarious. The impacts of the world food and fuel crises in 2007 and the financial and economic crisis in 2008 have clearly demonstrated the open and vulnerable nature of our economies. This, coupled with the impact of climate change, strengthens the case for a unique position for Small Island Developing States and hence a more prominent place within the United Nations system as a recognized category with all the attendant benefits and obligations.

Despite our many challenges, Small Island Developing States continue to demonstrate strong leadership particularly in the area of climate change and in the work of the United Nations in general. Significant progress has been made in the areas of the protection of biodiversity, strategies for promoting renewable energy, and the achievement of the MDGs. These efforts need to be complimented both by the United Nations system as well as by other Member States especially the developed countries.

Mr. President,

It is regrettable that to date no consensus has been reached on the best way to deal with what we consider a clear and present danger to our planet. The failure at Copenhagen should be further motivation for all countries to work assiduously towards an agreement in Mexico.

We commend the efforts being made towards a consensus on climate change; however, we maintain that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change should be the primary forum for negotiating the global response to climate change. We therefore call upon all Member States to work within this framework in order to arrive expeditiously at a binding agreement which will recognize the shared but differentiated responsibilities of Member States.

PEACE AND SECURITY

The Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Mr. President,

Since its establishment, the United Nations has played and continues to play a critical role in fostering greater understanding amongst nations and maintaining peace and security throughout the world. The UN has also been able to reduce conflict and minimize tensions between countries and peoples. These efforts have been buttressed by other significant efforts such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Aspects.

In May this year the United Nations held the Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Dominica supports the outcome of the Conference and calls upon all Member States to adhere to the obligations of the Treaty. We call for a world free of nuclear weapons and join the calls for total disarmament.

Small Arms and Light Weapons

Mr. President,

Small arms and light weapons continue to pose a major threat to peace and security throughout the world. Dominica is very concerned over the increase in that illicit trade in the Caribbean region. We are not convinced that the larger nations of the world comprehend the extent of the inability of smaller nations like my own, which bridge the producers and consumers of narcotic substances, to cope with this new horror.

The continued demand in the North for drugs produced in the South, and the growth of the related trade in small arms and light weapons, have placed us in the crossfire of these illicit activities. Yet it appears to us that the larger nations of the world only take decisive steps to cope with this situation when it has become untenable for themselves. In that context we do not believe that sufficient consultation now exists to ensure that the smaller states are provided, on a continuous basis, with the capabilities needed for persistent attention to the problems arising in our jurisdictions. This is yet another aspect of the case for special and differential treatment in the security and social development spheres.

Terrorism

Mr. President,

The threat of terrorism is of concern throughout the world. Radical extremism has created an environment where cultural and religious misunderstandings and misplaced anger have claimed the lives of thousands. We extend our sympathy to all the Member States which have lost citizens at the hands of those who have sought to destabilize governments and to instil fear in the rest of humanity.

By its very nature, the fight against terrorism requires global action. This must involve the efforts of the UN in fostering a culture of peace, tolerance, and understanding amongst the peoples of the world.

RE-BUILDING HAITI

Mr. President,

During last year's General Debate, Dominica recognized the important role of the United Nations in the rebuilding process of our sister Nation of Haiti. We also called upon those Member States who had pledged assistance, to make good on their promises in order to foster the social and economic development of Haiti.

Today, the challenges facing Haiti have been magnified to a degree which requires further commitments from all members of this august body. The destruction brought onto Haiti by the earthquake in January has made the need for resource mobilization a matter of extreme urgency.

In March the United Nations hosted the Haiti Donors Conference. Dominica wishes to commend the organizers and contributors to this initiative. During the Conference several Member States pledged their support to the re-construction efforts. Commitments of several billion US dollars were made.

Sadly, to date the government and people of Haiti have been able to access only a fraction of those pledges. We call on all Member States to make good their promises so as to ensure that the rebuilding process can continue and to avoid further deterioration of the political, social and economic situation of that country.

Mr. President,

The focus in rebuilding Haiti should not be solely on physical infrastructure, but also on the building and re-building of institutions to strengthen the governance of Haiti and to empower its people through technology transfer and capacity building. It should also include the development of the productive sectors to place Haiti on a path to economic independence.

Most importantly, Mr. President, the international community must recognise and accept that the government and people of Haiti must be placed at the centre of the reconstruction process so as to engender a spirit of unity of purpose, ownership and meaningful partnership, even at these most challenging times.

Mr. President,

The crisis in Haiti presents both a challenge and an opportunity, not only to the international community but also to the governments and financial institutions to which that country remains heavily indebted. We call on those international financial institutions and governments to cancel the remaining debt owed by Haiti in order to provide more latitude for that country to fully realise its recovery efforts. As far as trade is concerned, we urge all members to liberalize trading regimes so as to allow greater access of Haitian products into their markets without barriers.

CUBA

Mr. President,

Earlier I spoke of the threats which plague mankind in the era of globalization. I also highlighted the need for multilateralism and the need for cooperation between and amongst states.

These challenges can only be overcome in a global environment where there exists respect for each other's territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's domestic affairs, respect for sovereignty and the right to self-determination.

It is in this context that Dominica again calls on the United States of America, to discontinue its economic blockade against the people of the Republic of Cuba.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Mr. President,

The rule of Law is an important aspect of international Law. Adherence to our international obligations is important to the maintenance of peace and security and ensuring that all persons regardless of race, nationality, creed or gender continue to believe in the international system and continue to recognise that this system is for the benefit of all peoples and nations whether large or small.

This is why the situation in which our sister nation of Antigua and Barbuda has been placed vis-a-vis its dispute with the United States of America is extremely unfortunate and must be remedied as quickly as possible.

We urge the parties involved to quickly seek to resolve the situation and arrived at a negotiated settlement that is fair and just.

CONCLUSION

The central role of the United Nations in global governance

Mr. President,

The citizens of this planet have come to recognize that new developments in technology have brought an interdependence among peoples and states as they vigorously pursue the development of their separate countries. They have also come to realize that there must be increasing cooperation between nations in order to ensure a deliberate and planned approach to the maintenance and development of the resources of this planet. In that connection, regional processes of cooperation have increasingly come to characterize the conduct of nations.

But as the technology of communication has increased international connectiveness, it has also become apparent that regionalism often proves insufficient; and that it is a global approach that has to be taken to new issues which arise.

Consequently, my country strongly supports the principle, that it is the United Nations - to which all countries turn in times of crises - which must play the fundamental role in the surveillance of all developments which affect our planet; and hereby reaffirm our commitment to the central role which the United Nations should play in global governance.

I thank you.