



PERMANENT MISSION OF SAINT LUCIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

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SALUTATIONS

May I, first of all, Mr. President, congratulate you on your election as President of this year's session of the General Assembly. I wish also to place on record Saint Lucia's thanks to Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his contribution as President of the 66th session.

Mr. President, I wish to underscore what you have said, and which should consistently be reminded, peace is not merely the absence of war. Indeed, poverty and prejudice are like the flint and tinder for violent feud and furor. And so, we embrace your suggested theme, for while we generally know peace in the Caribbean, we are aware of the real struggles for humanity to realise peace in the face of disaster, injustice, inequity and conflict.

A WORLD ENDOWED WITH UBUNTU

Mr. President, beyond this chamber lies a beautiful world. And, whatever the flaws and failures of mankind, we still are blessed to be given a world from which we seek life and livelihoods. It is difficult to imagine at times, that even in the face of turmoil, dessimation, acts of brutality and calamity, humanity has progressed over millennia.

Mr. President, this is what must give us hope and confidence for the future – that we have been through this before and have come through colossal tragedies, unexplainable disasters, world wars and famine – and, we still are here. Our civilisation continues to thrive.

However, we can only succeed if we recognize and celebrate our shared humanity. This, therefore, must be a world that continuously affirms all human lives, a world that recognises our collective endowment, that celebrates our ingenuity and our enterprise. A world, as is said in Southern Africa, that is imbued with *Ubuntu*.

EQUAL RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Each year for the past seven decades, we sit here as equals, every one with a voice, every one with a say. Our size, whether defined by geography or by population, or by both, finds no relevance, albeit temporarily for the purposes of this discourse. And even while some have sat here longer, we can all embrace a commonality that is not transient or mutable. But even so Mr. President, we can at times forget that behind every country's representative are real people with real lives, who seek cherished moments despite their sea of despair.

And let there be no doubt, within all our countries – even when our leaders come here to speak – we will have, in our very own countries, differences of opinion, differences in philosophy, differences in faith.

Yet, despite all of this, the beauty of democracy is that we can embrace that common pursuit – a pursuit of happiness, prosperity, and enjoyment of life. Therefore, our philosophies should never destroy this pursuit; they should affirm it. Our faiths should never tear this apart, they should form and fashion souls of compassion, understanding and tolerance.

For our ancestors, from Africa to Asia, from Arctic to the Amazon, they all knew conflict and the cost it paid in their lives. We know the cost it pays right now to our humanity. And we should all know that history has repeatedly explained to us that warfare is not the best way to solve our problems.

So then, do we ignore the bombs and guns if they are not to be heard on our streets, in our cities, and parks and playgrounds? Should the girl in Aleppo or Benghazi not be able to share the same opportunities, and dreams, and hopes as a boy in Arlington or Birmingham?

Mr. President, no one expects a naïve world, with utopic leaders. Nor do we suggest that our world will not have conflict; for disagreement is inevitable in all aspects of life. However, I ask that we have the courage to be bold about the world we want. I ask that we act when we know we can. I ask that those leaders who hold the seats of higher authority: that they should always remember the minorities, those who are easily forgotten, easily marginalised, easily wiped away.

Mr. President, there should never be a season for injustice, never a season for corruption, never a season for poverty, never a season for brutality and never season for torment.

PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Therefore, Mr. President, Saint Lucia welcomes a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Syrian Republic and an immediate end to what is clearly a carnage, a human tragedy. We continue to support the efforts of the Special Envoy and of the Secretary General in this body's efforts to induce the parties to focus on coming to the table for negotiations, with a view to finding a path towards a resolution of the conflict which is acceptable to the majority of the people of Syria, and takes into account the necessity to ensure the welfare and interest of minorities in that State.

Mr. President, we are, of course, also very concerned about the resort to violence in the Middle East, intended to deal with either religious or ideological contentions. We condemn all attempts at disparagement of religious prophets, deities, symbols or practices, and appeal for tolerance and understanding. In the same vein Mr. President, we abhor the brutal murder of the Ambassador of the United States in Libya, and we share their pain and anguish. Religious intolerance is combustible and dangerous and ensnares even those nations far from the theatres of conflict.

Saint Lucia is very conscious of the active attempts in the Middle East to evolve new systems of governance, as recent systems appear, in some countries, to have outlived their usefulness to the majority of the citizens of those countries. Apart from our commitment to global and regional peace, we also need to recognize that turbulence in the Middle East has the undoubted effect of distortion of prices of the dominant global commodity of oil, harming the interests and development processes of large and small countries alike. The world desperately needs a peaceful Middle East. We express our hope for the continued evolution of peaceful and consensual approaches to issues of governance in the area.

PEACE BETWEEN THE CHINESE PEOPLES

Mr. President, Saint Lucia believes that all efforts to promote peace and prosperity for all, while of course protecting the health of our planet, should be embraced.

The Government of Saint Lucia is well aware of the determination of the Chinese people, to unify their country, signaled to the world with the taking by China of its rightful place in this august body of the United Nations. In that context, Saint Lucia welcomes the emerging dialogue and cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China on Taiwan. This cross-straits dialogue and cooperation will surely facilitate global harmony. We look forward to a continued evolution of the ongoing peaceful rapprochement among the Chinese people as they search to unify their civilisation.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE AFRICAN PEOPLES – IN AFRICA AND BEYOND

Mr. President, Saint Lucia also wishes to support the calls, that Africa needs permanent representation on the Security Council, as supported by the Presidents of Mali and South Africa. As we recognise the perils of conflict and warfare in Africa, so too should we recognise the ability of Africa to bring peace to itself. The voice of one billion people and that of an entire continent should no longer go unheard.

Further, Saint Lucia welcomes the resolution of the longstanding dispute in Sudan, and the achievement of self-determination of the new state of South Sudan into the comity of nations. It is pleasing that this process has occurred in a context where the states of the African continent have now also been creating new spaces in a bid to take advantage of the development of the continent's resources in a changing economic environment.

Mr. President, we cannot have global collaboration and cooperation, and start anew if extreme disparities are not reduced or eliminated. And so, it is necessary to observe the causes and respond purposefully to tackle the inequities that exist in the world.

While one of the obvious building blocks for development is that of good governance - political structures that are ethical and not fueled by greed and abuse - and while we can strengthen the rule of law, ensure property rights and undisputed elections, these by themselves do not and cannot secure democracy. And while democracy has no place for dictators or demigods, democracy is still rather meaningless to a person with no diet - no food on the table. The dispossessed will have no passion, no will. The depressed will not vote. Nor will the downtrodden.

Mr. President, we cannot continue to ignore the age-old injustices of slavery, of forcing people into labour, of decimating their culture and identity. Many of us here today are the descendents of the survivors of slavery. And so, as a part of this recognition, we support the Government of Jamaica in calls for the recognition of the impacts of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, and the need for a frank dialogue on the status of the people of African descent.

Furthermore, Mr. President, like Africa we all need the opportunity to trade equally and fairly. We all know the death of the Doha Talks was with an unwillingness to relent on large scale subsidies on farming and agriculture.

AN ANACHRONISM – THE CUBAN EMBARGO

Mr. President, one of the injustices that is a relic of an era of fear and dispute long gone is embargo imposed upon the people of Cuba, purely for purposes of political retribution and punishment. I must take this

opportunity to reiterate the conclusion of the Caribbean Community as a whole, most recently in December 2011, that, it is time to end the embargo placed against the Republic of Cuba by the United States.

Saint Lucia is part of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean states within the framework of the United Nations (GRULAC) which wishes to pursue the fullest measure of economic integration in the Hemisphere, as an instrument of our own economic growth, and in order to maximize economic and social cooperation in the area. Blockades and embargoes are, in that context, anachronistic and outmoded. In an era of globalization and economic liberalization, they cannot be tolerated or justified.

HAITI: A RELIQUARY OF COLONIALISM

Another reliquary of colonialism is that of our Caribbean Community member, Haiti. Mr. President, the suffering of the people of Haiti can only be matched by their perseverance. This is a country that was tormented into paying compensations to its former colonial master. This was an extraordinary and crude example of trade loss. And so today, the world's first black independent country is the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation. It is still very much deserving of the support of the United Nations in overcoming its recent pains and indigence brought on by the January 12 Earthquake of 2010 and should not be forgotten. Haiti is a member of the CARICOM family of nations, and so we pay due respect and regard to those countries in our hemisphere who came to the support and assistance of Haiti in its hour of need.

THE MIGRATION OF PEOPLE AND GUNS

Mr. President, we in the Caribbean continue to experience challenges of our skilled population seeking to settle in regions to the North, generally with open arms. However, we have also to tackle, the reverse flow of guns associated with the narcotics trade finding their way into our jurisdictions. We cannot have internal peace in our islands if our young people are too easily being given guns.

We raised this matter as one of great concern to our security at the Summit of the Americas in Cartagena, Colombia, in April this year. It is now clear that the current policies to combat the consumption and trafficking of illicit drugs across and within borders have failed. This is another human tragedy of immense consequence. Lives are being lost either to guns or to consumption of these drugs. We remain resolute that the whole matter of the drugs trade be reviewed. Collectively, we must craft new solutions to this evil.

We also wish to place on record our continued concern with the practice of deportation of seasoned criminals back to our small states, without any regard for the capacity of our internal security arrangements.

THOUGH WE ARE SMALL, OUR ECONOMIES CAN GROW

Mr. President, in all this, there is a sobering reality, being the leader of a small state like Saint Lucia. And so even as I have the distinction of standing here today, I know that many of the decisions that affect our world and my country are still made solely and unilaterally in the capitals of others, and at times multilaterally in groups of 5, or 8, or 20, or 30. It is said Mr. President that 80% of the world's trade and economic activity is held in 20 countries. I can assure you Saint Lucia and all of the Caribbean Basin are beyond the limits of this geo-political circle. With little or no resources, diplomatic or otherwise, Saint Lucia can only speak with its moral courage, authority, and convictions.

Mr. President, small islands are special places with special peculiarities that make us both unique yet vulnerable. Still, we know that if there is a willingness to support their growth and development, then small islands can be successful stories. Mr. Speaker, consider for instance that our fifteen member Caribbean Community has a combined population of seventeen million and an economy of about 89 billion US dollars. The US territory of Puerto Rico, itself part of the greater Caribbean, has a GDP of about 100 billion dollars. It suggests clearly that if there is support in trade and investment, though we may be small, our economies could grow. They could find sustainability.

FINDING A BALANCE FOR SMALL STATES

The Caribbean Community has continuously made the point that many small states are deceptively classed as "middle income" on the mere basis of per capita. A country the size of Saint Lucia, with the vulnerabilities that we face, should not be subjected to such a measuring tool for determining whether a state can stand on its own.

For instance, Mr. President, Saint Lucia experienced one hurricane in 2010 that caused damage totaling nearly 30% of our GDP. One Category 2 hurricane, in one year.

Our island, and small states like ours, are then forced to become even more indebted as we have to borrow to replace infrastructure such as arterial roads and bridges, without which our country's economy would face further contraction.

And even in the face of this, we are further impacted by unilateral domestic measures implemented in major developed states that place no sensitivity to matters such as our dependence on tourism, making our destinations even less desirable. Other islands that are highly dependent on international financial services are now suffering from the attempts by some states to sully the reputations of other states. When you place the burden of reduced foreign direct investment flows due to the Global Economic Crisis, and the recent announcement by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) that it has cut its forecast for global trade growth from 3.7% to 2.5%, though we live in a beautiful part of the world, the outlook looks grim.

And so, it means that development cannot be just about assistance, but also means that small states require some fairness and balance in the world economic space. From the point of view of the developing countries, the collapse of the Doha Round was a disappointing portent of difficult times to come in the discussions between developed and developing countries, a trend typified in our Hemisphere by an eventual lack of progress in the initiative towards a Free Trade Area of the Americas. At the same time however, there were increasing indications of the emergence of countries of Asia, Africa and the Far East as competitors in global economic competition.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Mr. President, we look to the future of a United Nations and other global institutions moving towards becoming more targeted and differentiated in their interventions and policies. We look towards a world in which the MDGs are realised. We look towards the future that the world may craft a new post 2015 strategy to tackle the major impediments to growth as well as to promote the major creators of wealth and prosperity.

One of these major issues is of course climate change. As expressed in Mauritius Strategy for Sustainable Development and in the 1994 Barbados Conference, small states are committed to seeing action taken on Climate Change and tangible support for the requisite adaptations and interventions needed at all levels.

Within the Caribbean Community, the Liliendal Declaration of CARICOM Heads of Government of 2009, encapsulated our concerns as small island states subject to major dislocation as a consequence of the threat of Climate Change, as follows:

“the region’s efforts to promote sustainable development and achieve the MDGs are under severe threat from the devastating effects of climate change and sea level rise. Of particular note is the increasing intensity of extreme weather events, resulting in severe damage to the region’s socio-economic resource based. Dangerous climate change is already occurring in all Small Islands and Low-lying Coastal Developing States (SIDS) regions including the Caribbean, and many SIDS will cease to exist without urgent, ambitious and decisive action by the international community”.

Saint Lucia is, therefore, in full support of the conclusions of the Rio+20 proceedings in Brazil on the challenges and potential solutions to the climate crisis and interrelated factors which continue to inhibit the achievement of a sustainable world, capable of facilitating the activities of all countries – both large and small. We are comforted by the words of the Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, that we will exist to secure a legally binding agreement to tackle Climate Change by 2015. With Climate Change, we cannot afford unfinished business, for there is but one world. We also hope that there will be a strong commitment to technology transfer and building local human capacity to deal with Climate Change and attendant disasters.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS, RENEWED PATHS

Mr. President, Saint Lucia looks forward to your tenure in directing the work of this 67th Session of the General Assembly as one in which, the upsurge of conflicts now characterizing our globe will be subjected to meaningful deliberations among our member-states.

Our concern as small countries is that persistent conflicts in respect of issues and problems currently plaguing various regions of the globe, can serve to distract our United Nations from devoting both attention and resources to persisting with solutions to the serious problems of economic transition and adjustment now characterizing international economic relations in particular.

In the cacophony of regional conflicts that inevitably draw the attention and involvement of the major powers, the problems of survival of small countries in the environment of larger states, has become more and more intractable.

We in Saint Lucia, as part of the Caribbean Community look forward to an enhanced cooperation with the countries of a continent from which a large proportion of our population finds its ancestry. We believe, and we propose, that it is possible to pursue this process through the United Nations development institutions in our sphere and on the African continent.

As is now well known, the traditional economic relations, under the auspices of the Commonwealth system, and then the African, Pacific and Caribbean institutional relationships in the context of our trade with Europe, are diminishing. We look forward to new avenues of relationships, a task in which the United Nations can be of great assistance to us.

Mr. President, I wish to extend to you the best wishes and support of my country and delegation for success in your task over the coming year.

I thank you.