



THE HON. WINSTON BALDWIN SPENCER
Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda

NATIONAL STATEMENT

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Please check against delivery.

Excellencies,

I stand here today as the leader of one of the smallest countries in the world; small by size, population and resources.

I also stand here today with a proud heart, and a strong voice, because, my small country of Antigua and Barbuda has produced a giant in the world's geopolitical sphere; he is among the finest and most accomplished diplomats to have ever walked these great halls.

Your Excellency, Ambassador John William Ashe, President of the General Assembly, the Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda send congratulations to you on your election as President of the Sixty-Eight Session of the General Assembly and we are beyond sure that you will guide this august body through a successful 68th session.

I offer congratulations also to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremic' on a job well done and for his unrelenting service to the international community.

**Mr. President,
Secretary-General,
Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Exactly five years ago today, I stood in these hallowed halls and stated that, "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 languishes. Transportation cannot prosper if manufacturing declines. 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."

Excellencies,

With the ever-increasing gaps in inequality among nations, the challenges for developing countries over the years have remained vast. In trying to address the issue of inequality, and diminish very basic human challenges by 2015, world leaders adopted the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The MDGs were described as and I quote, "a milestone in international cooperation" end quote. With a fifteen-year time span for its implementation, the declaration was widely expected to inspire development and directly improve the lives of hundreds of millions of people. These are people who are struggling to eke out the most basic living conditions and who are suffering from the effects of poverty, gender inequities, ill-health and environmental degradation.

Thirteen years have gone by, and what do we, as a global community, have to show in terms of concrete results? No matter which side of the lens we look from, something is appallingly wrong. With less than 2 years to go before 2015, we must ask ourselves as leaders why have the commitments related to the most significant global declaration made to the world's most vulnerable people, not being fulfilled?

Excellencies,

It is important for me to be extremely clear- I am not here to declare the MDGs as dead nor am I advocating for them to be interred. Rather, I remain convinced that they can still be refocused, reformed, reshaped, and rebranded into a new mechanism post-2015.

Mr. President,

We find ourselves standing at the precipice of 2015, that crucial defining moment; this moment is captured by notable but uneven developments in some crucial areas, considerable gaps remain and new challenges have emerged.

We as leaders must therefore acknowledge that now more than ever through the process of globalization, individuals and societies from corner to corner, oceans and continents are intricately connected and interdependent than ever before; therefore, a Post-2015 Development Agenda must concede to this fact and be guided by this reality.

The deliberations for international collaboration and development ahead of 2015, present the opportunity to redirect previous notions of prosperity and development among nations; and considering the current world economic, social and environmental challenges, this is indisputably critical.

Mr. President,

We must concede that the current structure of the internationally agreed development goals does not provide satisfactory remedies to our universal problems, which includes an increase in global warming, the escalating gap between the worlds's rich and the poor, the further deterioration of the world's financial system and the uneven roles that developed and developing countries play in responding and addressing issues of universal importance and impacts on our societies.

Taking into account some of these shortcomings, now is the opportune time for "setting the stage" for a Post-2015 Development Agenda that is all-inclusive, that is effective and pragmatic.

Excellencies,

Of concern to Antigua and Barbuda are the failings of the international community in fulfilling the aims and objectives outlined in the Barbados Programme of Action on the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

2014 will mark the twentieth anniversary of the first UN Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which was held in Barbados in 1994.

Looking back at the twenty years since that Conference, the corresponding actions to address the unique and special circumstances of SIDS by the international community has been lacking. It is my hope that Samoa 2014 will give the International community the opportunity to correct the wrongs made and to improve on shortcomings to SIDS.

The conference will also present us with a third chance to identify a set of concrete actions, which will be needed for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation and thereby regain momentum lost by SIDS in the quest for sustainable development.

We welcome the decision by the UN family to designate 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States. Antigua and Barbuda pledges to highlight throughout 2014 the issue of SIDS with the aim of reinvigorating the SIDS Agenda.

Mr. President,

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. My Government has deepened our integration efforts with our CARICOM brothers and sisters, focusing on fully implementing the CSME as well as deepening the various sub-regional regulatory frameworks.

As part of the smaller OECS grouping, Antigua and Barbuda fully joined and has endorsed the 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. At the same time my government has secured full participation in ALBA and CELAC as we seek to further strengthen the integration and development of Latin American and the Caribbean.

Mr. President,

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.

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 ecosystems.

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.

Mr. President,

Vulnerable developing societies such as ours are also victims to the globalization of crime; notably in the havoc wrought by handguns in the possession of criminal elements; narco-trafficking targeted, essentially, to markets in developed countries; and the deportation of criminals to our shores.

We urge the international community, in recognition of the link between globalization and crime, to provide greater support for the efforts of small island-states like Antigua and Barbuda in addressing the escalation of crime and also to strengthen the rule of law in combating international drug trafficking.

We further call on our developed partners to reduce the practice of deporting violent criminals to our shores. Most of these deportees have neither connection nor familiarity to our countries.

Mr. President,

Antigua and Barbuda is proud to be among the growing number of states that have thus far signed and ratified the Arms Trade Treaty. This Treaty, would, among other things, assist Antigua and Barbuda in enhancing our capacity to tackle the scourge created by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, which is associated with other trans-boundary crimes, such as drug trafficking.

We have emphasized throughout the whole process that these crimes have impacted negatively on the socio-economic well-being of our societies. Antigua and Barbuda stresses the importance of the early entry into force of the AT of the ATT and will continue to work with alacrity with member states to ensure its entry into force.

Mr. President;

Another threat to the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States such as Antigua and Barbuda is the rise in non-communicable diseases. The situation is at an alarming stage as hundreds succumb annually.

For Antigua and Barbuda, the prevention, care and treatment of Non Communicable Diseases continue to be a challenge. Heart disease, diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease and chronic respiratory diseases continue to be the leading causes of death in our region. Our healthcare system, economy and population are burned by NCDs; it is in this regard that my government has become even more proactive in addressing this issue.

Healthcare continues to be basically free for Antiguan and Barbudans and the government often times assist in seeking treatment for citizens when our facilities at home are unable to do so. I will ask this August body to continue to keep the issue of NCDs high on its agenda.

Fellow leaders, distinguished delegates,

My small developing nation of Antigua and Barbuda has sought to ensure that the trade rules agreed to by a majority of members of the international community, including the United States, are adhered to.

I take this opportunity once again, to draw to the attention of the Assembly, a trade dispute under the World Trade Organization (WTO) dispute settlement system between my country and the United States, which has been on-going for a decade.

I draw your attention to this dispute in this Assembly because I believe it has the potential to damage the credibility and undermine the utility of the dispute settlement system of the WTO, and of the WTO itself.

My Government won this case at both the original and appellate levels and yet, a decade later, the end is not in sight.

It is a case that pits the world's largest economy against one of the world's smallest, and despite our best efforts, our patient negotiations with the United States, have borne no fruit.

The United States has neither removed the offending laws nor agreed on a fair settlement with Antigua and Barbuda that would compensate for the wanton destruction of an entire economic sector.

We believe that it is a blow to the credibility of the WTO to have the world's largest economy and the WTO's most powerful member ignore the lawful award of its dispute settlement tribunal without consequence.

The international trading system will not long survive this profound challenge, and we call on the United States to correct past wrongs and to come to the table with meaningful proposals that can bring this matter to a just conclusion.

Although my Government has until now exercised 'strategic patience', we intend, through the only mechanism that the WTO has provided, to seek compensation for the thousands of jobs lost, the companies collapsed, and the general devastation of the second largest sector of our economy after tourism.

Mr President,

More than jobs are at stake here.

The WTO must be seen to deliver justice to its members, and especially to one of its smallest constituents. If not, its credibility as the arbiter of international trade disputes will bleed into the dust and hollow out its noble intentions.

Mr. President,

As a member of the CARICOM family, Antigua and Barbuda supports the preservation of the sovereignty of every nation. We are therefore very proud of our long-standing relationship with the Republic of Cuba. My government, in the strongest sense, condemns any discriminatory and retaliatory policies and practices which serve to prevent Cuba from exercising its right to freely participate in the affairs of the hemisphere.

Today, I once again reiterate my government's firm condemnation of the unilateral and extraterritorial application of coercive laws and measures contrary to International Law, the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of free navigation and international trade. Antigua and Barbuda therefore, urges the United States to respect and take note of the incessant call of the Members of the United Nations to immediately lift the unjust economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed against the Republic of Cuba.

These and other associated measures serve no other end but to daunt the socio-economic development and well-being of the people of the Republic of Cuba.

Antigua and Barbuda also affirms our long-standing stance and commitment towards combating terrorism in all its forms and expressions and condemns any action which goes against International Law, resolutions of the United Nations, and principles of human rights protection.

We therefore condemn the recent terrorist acts in Kenya and express our profound sympathy to the government of President Uhuru Kenyatta and the families of those who lost loved ones. We also in the strongest sense condemn acts of terrorism in other parts of the world.

Antigua and Barbuda also expresses our concern on the inclusion of the Republic of Cuba on the list of "States Sponsors of Terrorism" published by the State Department of the USA. We reject the unilateral elaboration of blacklists accusing states of allegedly supporting and sponsoring terrorism, which is inconsistent with international law. We request the United States of America to put an end to the unilateral practice.

Mr. President

Antigua and Barbuda welcomes the launch of the design for a Permanent Memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, an initiative that was championed by CARICOM. We also look forward to its full erection in the coming months.

Mr. President,

One year ago, I stood here and echoed the need for serious dialogue on the topic of Reparations. Today, I am proud that the members of CARICOM at its 34th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government held in Trinidad and Tobago in July agreed to support the establishment of a regional Reparations Commission to begin laying the ground work for a process of engagement and conversation on the issue for Reparations for Native Genocide and Slavery.

I am equally pleased that the first Regional Reparations Conference was held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines earlier this month with proposals for the formalization of a Regional Reparations Commission.

Antigua and Barbuda therefore conceptualizes the call for reparations as an integral element of our development strategy and that the legacy of slavery and colonialism in the Caribbean has severely impaired our development options.

We therefore assert that reparations must be directed toward repairing the damage inflicted by slavery and racism.

We have recently seen a number of leaders apologizing to the African Diaspora, to indigenous peoples, and to former colonies for past wrongs and injustices. I salute those leaders who have demonstrated such enlightenment and strongly encourage others to do so and equally match their words with concrete and material benefits to the descendants of genocide and the brutal enslavement of their ancestors.

Mr. President,

My country, while developmentally focused, is mindful of other global issues, particularly with reference to peace and security.

The continued unrest in the Middle East and particularly in Syria is heartbreaking.

The images of women and children being displaced and innocently killed, tug at my consciousness. Antigua and Barbuda gives its unconditional support to the preservation of the role of the United Nations and other organizations in working toward stabilization and peace in Syria and other conflict-ridden countries.

In the same vein we call on those leaders to protect civilians at all cost and move quickly to devise diplomatic solutions to the conflicts. Willful and deliberate attacks upon civilians should be taken seriously by the international community and the International Courts should move to act in a manner consistent with international laws and norms.

War or even the threat of war should be an absolute last resort and should have the full support of the international community at all times. Unilateral prescriptions will never solve a problem.

Mr. President,

We cannot successfully achieve a Post-2015 Development Agenda if world leaders standby idly and see the tears and desperation on the faces of the many hungry children.

We cannot successfully achieve a Post-2015 Development Agenda if world leaders allow easily treatable illnesses and diseases to destroy our populations.

We cannot successfully achieve a Post-2015 Development Agenda if world leaders sit back and allow the lines of class divisions and insurmountable social barriers to increase.

We cannot successfully achieve a Post-2015 Development Agenda if world leaders continue to allow the imbalances of economic growth, destructive trade barriers and protectionism from developed countries to developing countries to persist.

We cannot successfully achieve a Post-2015 Development Agenda if world leaders don't act to save our environment and stop the pollution of our air, oceans and wanton destruction of our forests and lands only for the benefit of a few.

When the founders of these United Nations formulated this great institution, it was not envisaged to be a stage and repository for eloquent speeches.

The United Nations was conceptualised as a place where our challenges are discussed.

Where solutions are cultivated.

Where action is taken.

Mr. President, it is for these reasons that our leaders gathered here today should work towards a fundamental, impartial, and sustainable social, economic and environmental Post-2015 Development Agenda that is far-reaching and all-inclusive.

Anything less would be unacceptable and would be a travesty to millions of the world's inhabitants for whom we are required to act and do so courageously and decisively.

Thank You.