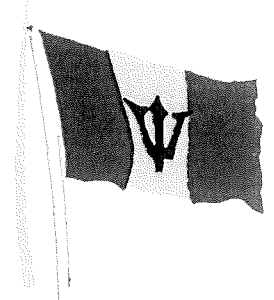


*Permanent Mission
of Barbados to
the United Nations*



STATEMENT BY

**HON. MIA AMOR MOTTLEY, Q.C., M.P.
PRIME MINISTER OF BARBADOS**

TO THE

GENERAL DEBATE

OF THE

73RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Madam President,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your election and in particular, for being only the fourth woman in the 73 year history of this organization, to hold the high honour of being elevated to the position of President of the United Nations General Assembly.

I also take this opportunity to express my delegation's thanks to your predecessor, His Excellency, Mr. Miroslav Lajcak for the way in which he conducted the work of the General Assembly during the 72nd Session and to wish him well.

Permit me, Madam President to observe that this United Nations must show leadership in recognizing the talents and contributions of women to human civilization and progress. Women have value and give much, whether they labour over smoking wood fires; whether generations of women are trapped in poverty because of a lack of opportunity, equality and respect; whether they lead countries; whether they stay at home to care for families; or whether they come to the UN, as you have, to preside over outcome documents, robust negotiations, bracketed paragraphs, reform processes and global policy platforms, in the name of creating for all people everywhere, a life of dignity. Madam President, as a female leader, I cannot help but observe that the face of poverty all over the world, is predominantly female and I commend you on your seven priority areas one of which is improving the quality of life of women and girls.

Madam President,

When Barbados' first Prime Minister, the Right Excellent, Errol Walton Barrow, addressed this august assembly for the first time

after Independence, just over 50 years ago, he made the pronouncement that in its international relationships Barbados would be “friends of all and satellites of none.” That assertion became the underpinning philosophy that has guided how Barbados conducted itself on the world stage. The challenge now, however, is that our country’s core principles and values have remained constant, but the world in which we live has changed. It has become increasingly hostile. Transactions have become more important than relationships. Indeed, the mighty manoeuvre to make minions of the majority.

I entered public life almost three decades ago. At that time, I never believed that as Barbados entered the second fifty years of our independence we would again be forced to fight battles that predated Independence. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was forged out of the rejection of the dominance of commercialism over the citizen; out of social and economic alienation; out of two world wars and an atomic bomb and the world’s recognition that the human family must unite to ensure that we never again stand on the precipice of annihilation.

Madam Chairman, the Government which I have the honour to lead, was voted into office just over three months ago, in the midst of the most dire economic crisis Barbados has ever faced. The tremendous challenge and responsibility now is to define a new trajectory for my country. We must reinforce our core values as a people while remaining relevant and responsive in a rapidly evolving and often hostile world, which threatens the viability of small vulnerable states such as my own. Peace and social stability can only exist when all

the world's citizens are given the opportunity and space to thrive. Trade and business flourish when societies develop and are able to buy each other's goods and services. This yields more beneficial results than the building of walls, the tightening of borders and the closing of ports to refugees and migrants. As in the past, a fair opportunity is all my country and citizens seek.

The multilateral system acknowledges and fosters mutual respect and dignity for all members of the human family, whether they are mighty or meek. It accords to all the right to live in societies that are stable, peaceful, equitable and sustainable. The conditions for such societies are created not by fine words, but by fair actions, not by flowery rhetoric, but by resolute determination to work for the good of all the peoples of the world.

Hence Madam President, it is in this forum that SIDS and other vulnerable countries must know that their sovereignty is to be respected and advanced and that the meek have no less a right to exist in dignity, than do the mighty. Platforms such *Rio* and *Rio+20*, the *Barbados Plan of Action*, the *Mauritius Strategy of Implementation*, the *SAMOA Pathway*, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* as founded on the *SDGs*, the *Paris Agreement* and the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development*, the reform of the Security Council and of the UN itself, must provide the architecture for transformation for the people who most need to be lifted out of poverty and moved out of the way of serious threats to their survival and sustainability.

Today's leaders are again fighting battles for non-interference, respect, recognition and rights that many of us thought had long been won by a previous generation. Economic colonisation is replacing physical colonization. A creeping trend against multilateralism threatens to undermine, and perhaps even reverse, the effort and achievement of more than 70 years of collectivism. This should concern us all.

Evidence and history clearly show that this organisation is at its strongest when it unites in pursuit of great causes and the wellbeing of the entire human family; when it has worked for peace, to ensure that bombs and bullets do not cut down our boys before they become men; that our girls have access to education; our women do not die in childbirth; that all people have the opportunity for decent work and that irrespective of the country in which they are born, our children can have a reasonable life expectancy. People take the work and achievements of the United Nations for granted because they are rarely reminded that the peace, prosperity, security and stability enjoyed by the majority of the world's citizens come through the collectivism of the UN's 193 member-states.

The hard lessons of history demonstrate that we can only survive in a world based on a transparent rules-based system; that respects the dignity of citizens; that protects the sovereignty of states to chart their own destiny; that engenders inclusion over alienation; and fairness over favouritism. These are the very essence of multilateralism. The tensions of a world torn by "isms and schisms", by religious intolerance, by xenophobia and fear, by bullying and greed, cannot lead to prosperity and stability, neither for the mighty

nor for the meek. When this United Nations was founded, our leaders passed to us a baton. It was a vision of hope for humanity.

Let us ask ourselves, can we truly afford to drop the baton in the race of development? Or in the pursuit of the SDGs? Or because of a failure to stand in unison and “speak truth to power”, in order to defend the gains made by generations now gone?

Madam President, I speak in this Assembly at a time when the confluence of circumstances on our social, economic and environmental landscapes are so severely threatened that Caribbean civilization, as we know it, is at risk. Let me share with you the reality and challenges confronting the leaders of small, vulnerable island states.

- Countries of our region, such as Guyana and Belize, face border disputes and in the case of Cuba, a decades-long embargo keeps their people disadvantaged and national progress constrained. These are matters of serious concern for Barbados. Should we take it as a given that some countries can always determine the stability of others? Why do you think that the figures of history who garner the most respect are the humanitarians – Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Mandela, Kofi Annan?
- Less than 48 hours ago, at the One Planet Summit I saw a map which has since haunted me. The map showed a number of dangerous tipping points that if reached, will result in devastation to the peoples of the Arctic, Antarctic and Coral

Reef regions of our world. An increase in mean temperatures of two degrees, will wipe out the islands of the coral reefs and their peoples who are already contending with the increased frequency and ferocity of hurricane systems. Just like our ancestors, we are being shown that we are marginal at best and irrelevant at worst. If our coral reefs are destroyed and islands are inundated by sea level rise, where are we to go?

- In my region and my country, our path to economic growth is being choked off unilaterally by institutions in which we are not allowed to advocate for ourselves and from which others dictate our fate. Barbados, the Caribbean and other SIDS have had to confront the reality that our percentage in trade of goods and services is miniscule, but we are bound by the same rules that apply to those who dominate and can distort global trade. Small states like mine were shepherded out of agriculture and told that services were the route we should use for development. My country, for example, tried financial services pursuant to double taxation treaties, utilizing due diligence, operating a clean jurisdiction that is not a tax haven and complying with OECD requirements. Now we are being told our tax practices are harmful and unfair competition to those who still enjoy the bulk of the revenues in global trade and services. Where are we to turn?

- These twin threats to which I just referred are conjoined with our high debt to GDP ratios, now likely to increase because of derisking. The unilateral cessation of correspondent banking relationships reduces access to capital and our capacity to

engage in trade and conduct business in the international market place. Derisking jeopardises our capacity to remain properly integrated into the global financial, trade and economic systems. Is there no door to development that our people can legitimately enter?

- Bad though all of this is, there is still more, Madam President. Our classification as middle income countries denies us the concessionary financing which we so desperately need to help to build capacity and resilience. Moreover Madam President, the designation of middle income status of the islands of the Caribbean, based solely on GDP per capita income, yet ignoring vulnerabilities and the absence of resilience, really only serves to misconstrue wellbeing as entrenched and irreversible. That is a false perception when set against our experience, which demonstrates that the veneer of wellbeing is easily stripped away by sea swells, strong winds or rising rivers across the island chain. This has been repeatedly proven in every decade by Hurricanes such as Gilbert, Katrina, and more recently Ivan, Irma and Maria, which robbed several islands of years of work and effort, over 200% of GDP and set back, by decades, their dreams of development. Even as I speak, Madam Chairman, Tropical Storm Kirk is churning past my country and heading across the islands of the Eastern Caribbean. Even though the eye passed north of Barbados, and even though its wind speeds have, technically, not merited the categorization of hurricane, it has rained for 12 hours straight over the island and caused severe flooding and property and infrastructural damage across large sections of the country. I

am therefore cutting short my official duties abroad and returning home this evening. But I ask - Would vulnerability not be a better measure of status and sustainability than GDP?

- Our shrinking economic and development space have contracted even further as result of a reduction in Official Development Assistance and Foreign Direct Investment. Yet, we remain highly vulnerable with limited size, capacity. In these circumstances, are we not deserving of the policy space and opportunity to build social, economic and environmental resilience?

- The new language of the development system encourages us to pursue “innovative financing.” This connotes the tightening of tax loopholes, strengthening collection, the elimination of corruption and the widening of the net in order to ensure the taxes that are owed actually reach Government’s coffers. The truth is, that the national tax bases of SIDS are low yield because of the small size of our populations and the microbusinesses which comprise our indigenous business sectors. Hence, the utilisation of private-public partnerships or PPPs which are also being advocated, have low returns on investment and are therefore unattractive for the international private sector. The Financing for Development Agenda does not include any specific provision for SIDS that is predicated on our realities and vulnerabilities. Where then is the revenue to finance development to come from?

Madam President,

Having voiced my concerns, let me now share my commitments.

Barbados is committed to multilateralism. In the absence of a rules based system, the law of the jungle dominates. It becomes the meek versus the mighty. For us the commitment to multilateralism is not an academic exercise. It is critical to our existence and our being and that, fundamentally, is the only way in which we are not unequally yoked. It is the only way in which we have choice and by extension, freedom to exist.

We are committed to the establishment within the multilateral system of a mechanism for development financing which recognises the vulnerabilities of SIDS and uses their maritime space, which is an effective carbon sink and is significantly larger than their terrestrial space, as the basis for funding. In the case of Barbados, our maritime space is 400 times larger than our terrestrial space.

We are committed to pursuing a Green Economy and Blue Economy. To this end, my Government has established a single Ministry with responsibility for Maritime Affairs and the Blue Economy. In 2007, Barbados was the first government in the Americas to establish a National Green Economy Policy which we will fully operationalise and transition Barbados to a climate resilient society and economy powered by renewable energy.

We are committed to finding and maximising legitimate policy space to pay our way in the world and to ensure our citizens' dignity and a better quality of life.

We are committed to creating a prosperous, entrepreneurial society with fair opportunity for our citizens in which they can live free from the scourge of the NCDs, drugs and gun violence.

We are committed to building a strong, exceptional Barbados brand within the global family of nations.

I speak for humanity and in defence of Caribbean civilization. I cannot accept that we are dispensable.

So who among you is listening? Which of you is really hearing? Who is prepared to stand in the breach, in defence of one world? Who are prepared to raise their voices in support of those of us who have been asked to remain mute and invisible, while the rest of the world gets on with the business of development? As all previous generations have been, our generation will be judged, not on nice words or appropriate incantations, but on the effectiveness of our actions.

Will we carry and hand over to future generations, the baton left us by those who dreamed of a world of united nations or will we drop it? I urge you today, to hold that baton tight as we run the development course and until it is time to hand over.

We cannot and must not fail.

Madam President, I am much obliged to you.