



STATEMENT BY

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Theme: “Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalise the United Nations.

Check against delivery

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

It is an honour to address you and this noble body in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs of Grenada. I extend congratulations to you, on your election as President of the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly.

We reiterate our confidence in you and your team to lead this Session, and we offer our support for the work ahead this year, under the theme, "Building resilience through hope - to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalise the United Nations".

I join my esteemed colleagues in commending and thanking the outgoing President of the 75th General Assembly, His Excellency Volkan Bozkir, for his able stewardship of the General Assembly during the past year.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Secretary-General António Guterres on his re-appointment to serve and lead this august institution for another 5 years. I applaud his

tireless efforts and commitment in addressing the growing global challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change crisis, as we collectively pursue sustainable solutions.

Mr. President,

As we continue to grapple with COVID-19, its death toll, the negative impact on our economies, the social fallouts, and the inequitable access to vaccines, particularly for small island developing states like Grenada, all of which undermine the stability and survival of our peoples, the theme for this year's General Assembly could not have been more appropriate.

Mr. President,

COVID-19 has indeed wreaked immense havoc on economies across the world, but with a particular intensity and lasting effect on small economies such as ours. Prior to the first case of COVID-19 on the island in March 2020, the Grenadian economy was on an upward trajectory since 2013, growing at an average rate of 4.5 per cent per year.

This growth was mainly driven by robust activities in the construction, tourism and private education sectors. This upward trend in output was disrupted by the pandemic with preliminary estimates showing that the economy contracted by 13.7 percent in 2020. Stark declines were recorded in several sectors, most notably Tourism and Air Transport.

Unemployment rose from a record low of 15.1 percent in the fourth quarter of 2019 to 28.4 percent in the second quarter of 2020, with 14,000 jobs being lost as a direct consequence of the pandemic.

The socio-economic fallout from the pandemic has been especially severe for vulnerable groups, particularly women, youth and the unskilled, who are overrepresented in the tourism and informal sectors, which were hardest hit by the pandemic.

Sixteen months after the first COVID-19 case was reported on-island, the local economy continues to experience the lingering effects. For the first six months of the year, economic activity was below pre-COVID levels, but slightly above the comparable period in 2020.

Data for the first quarter of 2021 show periods of declines in most sectors, including hotels and air transport. However, there are indications of improved economic activity relative to 2020 as evidenced by second quarter data available for most sectors.

Visitor arrivals also increased during the second quarter of 2021 relative to the same period in 2020. This trend is expected to continue in the second half as vaccination rollouts increase and cross-border travel improves globally.

Enhanced implementation of the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) should further stimulate the economy and increase investor confidence.

The unemployment rate has dropped since the spike in the second quarter of 2020 to 18.5 percent in the fourth quarter, but increased slightly in the first quarter of 2021 to 19.5 percent, which is the most recent data available.

The rate of recovery globally and locally is slower than initially projected. Inequity in vaccine access, slower than anticipated vaccination rates, vaccine hesitancy, emergence of new COVID-19 variants, second and third waves of the pandemic in several countries, trade disruptions, as well as rising commodity prices and freight costs, are factors which hinder global economic recovery, and thus, the recovery of the local economy.

Nonetheless, the Government of Grenada continues to implement policies and measures to protect lives and safeguard livelihoods during this period of extreme uncertainty.

The priorities for the 2022 Budget are based on Government's strategic policy agenda for recovery, transformation and resilience, which is set out in its Medium-term Action Plan (MTAP) for the period 2022 to 2024.

The various actions of the multi-year MTAP are the vehicles through which the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) 2020-2035 is being implemented. The MTAP for the period 2022-2024 sets out the strategic actions for implementation, for the responsible entities, the performance indicators and the alignment with relevant SDGs, under each National Goal and Outcome of the NSDP.

Mr. President, it is imperative that we continue to stress and address the reclassification of our status by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistant Committee (DAC), which has resulted in marginalisation of the quantum of development assistance to the region.

This is clearly problematic. We again urge advocacy and support from Organisations, including those under the umbrella of the United Nations, in the dismantling of these unfair rulings. We reiterate that economic data such as Gross Domestic Product per capita does not reflect the true nature of the vulnerability of Caribbean States.

We, therefore, repeat our call for the creation of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index that adequately addresses those vulnerabilities. We strongly urge that they be completed no later than the end of 2022.

Small and vulnerable to natural disasters and the effects of Climate Change, we continue to call for advocacy where the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) are concerned, to allow us to effectively face the developmental challenges posed by the pandemic, and regain access to concessional financing.

We take the opportunity to thank all States, including Cuba, Mexico, Argentina, The People's Republic of China, the United States, the United Kingdom, and others, which provided and continue to provide direct medical assistance to Grenada, to deal with the pandemic.

Mr. President, CARICOM Member States, including Grenada, have reaffirmed our commitment to tackling the phenomenon that is Climate Change. We call for continued support and assistance, not only with mitigation, but also with building human resource capacity, which should be complemented by sustainable growth and transformation. Increased resource capacity and resilient infrastructure will clearly assist with risk reduction and resilience.

Like many Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Grenada faces extreme risks in the agriculture sector, which not only affect our food security, but also have negative impacts on our main export Crops, fruits crops, Forestry, Livestock and Fisheries.

In order to respond to these impacts and increasing threats, Grenada is moving quickly to implement Climate Smart Agriculture as one of the Climate Change Adaptation strategies to reduce impacts. We, therefore, have an urgent need to access additional resources to guarantee the survival of our agriculture sector through climate smart practices.

Mr. President, we not only have to grapple with Climate Change, but with ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources. This continues to be one of Grenada's top policy agenda items. Our Government has adopted an ambitious "Blue Growth" agenda to sustainably utilise our vast maritime territory, which is over seventy (70) times the size of our land space, and its countless resources, which represent a significant contributor to the GDP of the country.

Grenada looks forward with great hope to the UN Ocean Conference in 2022, and driving well overdue global ocean action, through science-based innovative solutions, for sustainable development, as we embark on the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021 - 2030.

Mr. President, we cannot discuss climate change in isolation to health. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Grenada calls for advocacy for an enabling environment to promote

and adopt the One Health Agenda at a global level, an approach that recognises the connection between well-being, prosperity, and a healthy environment. As we seek to prevent, detect, and respond to future pandemics, non-communicable diseases, including mental health, must also be examined. Our planetary health and climate change require an integrated policy, and, among other things, cooperation, leadership, governance, and political will, as well as the sharing of resources and expertise to find better and more urgent solutions.

Mr. President, let me categorically state that Grenada, as part of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), strongly condemns racism, intolerance and discrimination in any form, as well as acts and crimes associated with racism and discrimination.

Mr. President,

Grenada welcomes the General Assembly's unanimous adoption, on 2nd August 2021, of the resolution entitled "Establishment of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent", a momentous undertaking on the anniversary of the abolition of slavery across CARICOM, almost 200 years ago.

Even as contemporary issues demand our focus and attention, Grenada and the Caribbean Community remain conscious of the history and the impact of slavery.

From our standpoint, we understand all too well the challenges faced in turning global political commitment into meaningful reality. We, therefore, call for greater international attention to this issue. The international community cannot address sustainable development without considering its interconnectivity to human rights.

Mr. President,

It is with immense pride that I also highlight the historic and successful inaugural Africa-CARICOM Summit, graciously hosted by His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya, on 7 September 2021.

Moreover, with the establishment of a CARICOM Mission in Kenya, it is our sincere hope that the Caribbean and African Regions will continue to build on, and deepen, our bonds of friendship and cooperation.

Mr. President,

Every year, Grenada reiterates the counter-productivity of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, and the inhumane socio-economic hardships it places on the people of the Republic of Cuba, a Country that has provided a wealth of humanitarian assistance around the world, including during the onslaught of COVID-19, but is nonetheless, hindered from participating in the global economy. We again thank our sister island nation of Cuba for its solidarity, and its invaluable contribution and support to Grenada, our region, and the world, in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, and many other areas of support.

Mr. President,

Grenada votes annually with the overwhelming majority of the General Assembly in support of General Assembly resolutions calling for the removal of the Embargo against the Government and people of Cuba. This year, we again issue another clarion call for the complete removal of this Embargo and respect for the rights of the Cuban people. We further call for the readmission of Cuba, unhindered, to the economic, commercial, and financial community of nations.

Mr. President,

Grenada also calls for a stronger global response for Haiti's recovery, and also for an increased response to other humanitarian and security crises unfolding globally.

Mr. President,

As I conclude, Grenada reiterates its steadfast support for the pursuit of international peace and security, and believes that law and security are the sine qua non for the facilitation of the peaceful settlement of disputes, a vital component to achieving and maintaining international peace and security.

Grenada reiterates its call that the United Nations membership reflect on its governing principles, as set out in its Charter.

It is against this backdrop, Mr. President, that we, the community of nations—working in tandem in our relentless pursuit of the achievement of the goals of this distinguished Organisation—can relish in HOPE: HOPE for a more just and inclusive society; HOPE for rebuilding sustainable societies that adequately respond to the needs of our shared home, Earth; HOPE to reinvigorate and revitalise OUR United Nations; and, HOPE that, by standing together, with mutual respect, we prove to be resilient to—and overcome—the challenges of today. Mr. President, **now** is the time to turn hope into meaningful action, for the benefit of all our Peoples.

I thank you.