



## Commonwealth of Dominica

Address by

**His Excellency Charles A. Savarin, SAH, DAH,**  
President of the Commonwealth of Dominica

On the occasion of the 77<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General  
Assembly

***Theme: “A Watershed Moment, Transformative Solutions to  
Interlocking Challenges”***

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**Mr. President,  
Your Excellencies,  
Heads of State and Heads of Government,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Warmest greetings and a very pleasant good evening to all.

**Mr. President,**

My delegation, and by extension, the Government and People of the Commonwealth of Dominica, congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of the 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly, and wish you every success during your tenure.

We also express appreciation and gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Abdulla Shahid, for the able manner with which he presided over the 76<sup>th</sup> Session.

Mr. President, permit me to express my deepest condolences to his Majesty King Charles III, to the Royal Family and to the Government and People of the United Kingdom on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Her Majesty was a symbol of stability and continuity, not only to the United Kingdom but to the Commonwealth and the world at large.

As we continue to mourn her passing, I extend my very best wishes and that of the Government and people of the Commonwealth of Dominica for long life and good health to His Majesty King Charles III and continued prosperity and peace to the People of the United Kingdom.

***Mr. President:***

This 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly is being convened at a time when we are faced with innumerable challenges which have both current and long-term implications.

These include climate change; degradation of our ecosystem and loss of biodiversity; poverty; inequality and the growing challenge of chronic non-communicable diseases.

All of these have occupied the attention of the august body over the years, with only marginal progress in finding solutions for resolving these major challenges.

Compounding these challenges are other emerging threats such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the unfolding war in Ukraine.

**Mr. President,**

The invasion of one country by another must always be condemned, and Dominica has condemned the invasion of Ukraine without reservation.

There will always be differences and conflicting interests between countries, but there must be a better way in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, to avoid invasion and war as a mechanism for resolving differences or conflicts.

In this **inter**connected world, what happens in one part of the world affects us all and so it is with the war in Ukraine.

We are all victims of the skyrocketing prices of oil and petroleum products and the resultant impact on the cost of electricity and on all aspects of transportation.

The cost of production of goods and services is similarly adversely affected and as Russia and Ukraine are among the

leading suppliers of grain, this conflict has created a shortage in the world's supply of grain with implications for hunger in countries which rely on imports of grain from these two countries.

***Mr. President, Excellencies,***

The developments since 2014 which have led to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2021 are well known. Nevertheless, we in Dominica are of the view that this invasion and the ensuing war could have been avoided.

We hold firmly to the principle that international disputes should preferably be settled through negotiation and arbitration and not through war.

We hold, Mr. President, that might is not necessarily right. Whatever argument may be put forward, the terrible toll

being inflicted on the people of Ukraine in terms of loss of life and destruction of their towns and cities is unacceptable.

The Commonwealth of Dominica therefore stands with the rest of the world in calling for an immediate cessation to the conflict which continues to rage in Ukraine.

***Mr. President,***

The Commonwealth of Dominica welcomes the deal which was brokered between Ukraine and Russia, with the assistance of Turkey, ably supported by the UN Secretary General, to have significant quantities of grain shipped from Ukrainian ports to various destinations and thereby alleviate the emerging global food crisis.

For these reasons and in the interest of global peace, the Commonwealth of Dominica urges all parties, to continue upholding their end of this agreement so that further relief can be felt globally as a result. We urge the United Nations (UN) to continue its efforts to broaden this opening and thereby usher in wider agreement between the parties and to bring this war to an end.

### **The COVID-19 Pandemic**

***Mr. President,***

Like most Member States, we in Dominica and the Caribbean, were ill prepared to deal with COVID-19 which in March of 2020 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization.

Notwithstanding the fact that most countries managed to contain the Covid-19 *pandemic and consequently* have eased COVID-19 restrictions, public health experts have warned



that the pandemic is not yet over. Furthermore, with new variants continuing to emerge, COVID-19 continues to pose a threat to the global community.

This pandemic has exposed the limitations of health systems in all countries large or small, developed and underdeveloped. The reality is that not all people have equal access to vaccines and lifesaving medicines even when faced with a pandemic declared by the World Health Organization.

We are now challenged to create better and stronger mechanisms, to allow a more effective response to future pandemics, and bring certainty for the poorest in the world, thus ensuring them, that they too, can have access to vaccines and medicines to combat future pandemics.

**Mr. President,**

This year's theme: ***A Watershed Moment, Transformative Solutions to Interlocking Challenges***, is analogous to the approach and trajectory outlined by the United Nations towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Member States have individually embraced the SDGs as the ideal to be universally pursued and achieved by 2030.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are more challenged than most to achieve these goals. The international community has pledged its support, however the question is, to what extent has tangible support been forthcoming?

That is the question which we must ask ourselves. We are at a watershed moment in more ways than one, and transformative solutions are necessary.

The challenge is to go beyond promises, commitments and pledges, to effective delivery and implementation.

### **Climate Change**

**Mr. President, Excellencies,**

The various global crises do not respect national borders. Our interconnected world means that no one is insulated or immune from developments which take place anywhere on this planet. Today planet earth is under severe threat and stress, and may very well become uninhabitable, if we further delay decisive corrective action.

We need to talk less and start taking those concrete and sustainable actions needed in order to reduce carbon emissions into the atmosphere.

It is important to remind this assembly, that Dominica is but a small, vulnerable island State, located within the

Hurricane Belt in the Caribbean. Hurricanes are getting stronger, more frequent, and more devastating because of climate change. Five (5) days ago on September 17, the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Maria, Dominica was impacted by the outer bands of Tropical Storm Fiona as it struck the island of Guadeloupe, just north of Dominica.

In addition to tropical storms and hurricanes, we are facing the prospects of droughts, warming seas and rising sea levels, all of which will affect lives and livelihoods.

For this very reason we continue to champion the call for collective global action, to build the resilience of our small island states to natural disasters which are triggered and exacerbated by our changing climate, and to protect the gains that small island states have been able to achieve over the past two (2) decades. We must lay a path for development that is sustainable and people-focused.

Over several years small States like ours have stood at this very podium, and at many other such podiums across the world, seeking to convince the developed world to change destructive practices that threaten our planet, and our very lives and livelihoods.

Yet despite our best efforts not enough corrective action is being taken. Not enough support is being given to us to adapt and build resilience to the impacts of climate change that are already upon us.

I will not stand here today to detail to you the ways in which climate change is affecting us. These are well known. We see the news reports; the evidence is all around us.

What we need from our developed partners in this UN family is a recognition and acceptance of responsibility, that

translates to a commitment to provide the funding that is required to enable our small states to become resilient.

This must be readily accessible and available to all of us on grant and concessional terms, with the only criteria for access being our vulnerability to extreme weather events.

**Mr. President,**

We have spoken here before of the cataclysmic impact of successive disasters on our country. Tropical Storm Erika in 2015 and Hurricane Maria in 2017 caused over 90% and 226% loss of GDP, respectively, with lives lost, people displaced, and livelihoods shattered.

These experiences triggered our goal of becoming the first climate resilient nation in the world, and has realigned our focus to concentrate on adaptation efforts and **building back better** in every sector of the economy.

Our Small Island Developing States are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change, a phenomenon which will continue to escalate with every increment of global warming.

**Mr. President,**

As sea levels rise, some small island states will eventually disappear, while others will experience coastal erosion which will ultimately destroy infrastructure, villages, towns and cities.

The Commonwealth of Dominica therefore reiterates its call to the international community to prioritize at COP27 the disbursement of climate financing to SIDS, to support our adaptation and resiliency efforts as we seek to minimize loss and damage from extreme climate events.

In this way, actions will reflect more equitable and justice-oriented responses towards fulfilling the goals and promises of sustainable development. Furthermore, the continuous call for higher levels of commitment towards climate justice must be reflected in tangible and effective responses.

### **Sustainable Development Goals:**

**Mr. President,**

Two months ago, at this very headquarters, the Commonwealth of Dominica presented its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) in keeping with our international obligations and in the spirit of good global governance.

Dominica reported on the tremendous progress accomplished both in terms of the advances made towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and our national agenda guided by the vision of becoming the world's first climate resilient nation.



As we continue to recover from the destructive weather events already mentioned, Dominica's main economic industries are showing signs of positive recovery.

Tourism and agriculture remain the main income generating sectors with GDP projected to reach pre-pandemic level by 2023, averaging 5% growth per year from 2022 to 2026. Tourism recovery has been supported by new infrastructure projects and improved and increased air access.

**Mr. President,**

At the centre of Dominica's resilience agenda are our citizens. The Government of Dominica has taken bold steps to continue revolutionizing its health and housing sectors, utilizing funds generated from its Citizenship By Investment (CBI) programme.

Across Dominica, new and modern climate resilient homes are being constructed for low and middle-income families, while modern and smart health and wellness centres have been constructed and equipped, in urban and rural communities.

This will allow them to withstand the impact from extreme weather and remain operational while also strengthening response to other natural emergencies and pandemics.

Dominica therefore calls on all States to adopt a multilateral, transformative and resilient approach towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and to support each other to meet our collective SDG targets to 2030.

***Mr. President,***

In that regard, the Commonwealth of Dominica takes this opportunity to commend the Government of the People's Republic of China for its commitment to add a further \$42 billion to the new Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund.

This will assist countries like Dominica that are on the frontline of the negative impacts of climate change, to accelerate the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

**Food Security:**

**Mr. President,**

Ensuring our citizens enjoy long and healthy lives will always be a priority. Therefore, what we grow and consume has to be a critical component of our resilience agenda. Global trends indicate that issues surrounding food security are not unique to Dominica.

Indeed, SDG 2 – Zero Hunger, calls on Governments to pursue smart and sustainable food production to help alleviate the perils of hunger.

Dominica is working to strengthen its agriculture sector to reduce on the importation of its food import bill. There is renewed emphasis on growing what we eat, and eating what we grow while at the same time ensuring that there is affordable and high quality produce for export on a consistent basis.

Our aim is to develop a scientific and practical approach to reducing the vulnerability of farmers and fisherfolk, through the adoption of resilient and sustainable practices.

**Global Security:**

**Mr. President,**

On May 25, 2022, the Commonwealth of Dominica signed the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, and subsequently ratified the said Treaty in June 2022. Dominica, and as far as we are aware, no Caribbean country has ever created, tested or launched a nuclear weapon.

We embraced this signing as our international obligation towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, as outlined in the UN Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Dominica therefore calls on all States who have nuclear weapons, to abide by international law, for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the use of diplomacy as a tool towards conflict resolution.

**Cuba**

**Mr. President,**

The trade and economic embargo imposed against our brothers and sisters in Cuba continues to be of great concern to us in the Caribbean, and the lifting of it, has become more urgent in light of the global impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on food security.

The Commonwealth of Dominica continues to join its voice with the voices of the overwhelming majority of members of this global organization, to call for the immediate lifting of the unjustified trade restrictions and export bans imposed on the good people of Cuba.

It has long been established, that whatever the objectives were 60 years ago when this embargo was instituted, it can no longer be justified, if it ever was.

The Government of Dominica therefore strongly urges the few States who continue to support these sanctions, to heed the call of the overwhelming majority of us gathered here, and lift this archaic, and unfair embargo against Cuba and let us all support the full integration of the Cuban people into the global financial and trading systems.

The embargo notwithstanding, the Cuban people continue to make a tremendous contribution to human capital development across the globe.

For decades, Cuba has been training medical doctors, nurses, engineers, and other professionals, as well as providing technical assistance to developing countries as part of its South-South cooperation. Cuba also offers professional training in various disciplines to thousands of students from all over the developing world.

Additionally, Cuba continues to add its voice in the fight

against terrorism and drug trafficking in the Caribbean and the rest of the world.

We therefore join all other member states who have called for the removal of Cuba from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism, and we ask instead, that we redirect our efforts to combating the real threats to global peace and security in the region.

### **Venezuela**

**Mr. President,**

In March of 2015 the United States declared Venezuela as posing an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States and imposed sanctions on that country.

The United States has been followed by a number of countries in imposing sanctions, and since then the good



people of Venezuela have been enduring severe hardship and suffering from the imposition of numerous financial and economic sanctions.

The consequences of these sanctions prevent millions of Venezuelans from meeting their most basic needs, made even worse by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, further impacting Venezuela's contracted economy and an already weakened health system.

The Commonwealth of Dominica again joins with the voices of the many other members of this global organization, to call for the immediate lifting of the unjustified oil embargo and other general sanctions imposed on the people of Venezuela.

Despite the implementation of those heavy and unjustified sanctions, Venezuela continues to provide meaningful technical and financial assistance to its regional partners.

This is quite evident through the benefits being derived from the Petrocaribe Energy Security Agreement through the ALBA Caribe Fund.

The political, economic, social and humanitarian crises in Venezuela demand immediate attention. It is further incumbent upon all of us to provide short and long-term solutions and opportunities for Venezuela to resolve its challenges and quickly improve the lives of ordinary Venezuelans.

### **Haiti**

**Mr. President,**

The current situation in Haiti continues to be of great concern to us in the Caribbean and demands greater

international attention. An editorial in the Washington post of 6<sup>th</sup> August 2022 called for “*Muscular International intervention.*” This was followed on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2022 by a statement from the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), reproaching the international community for its failure over the years in assisting Haiti and leaving the country in chaos.

**Mr. President,**

Haiti is a country which was once the wealthiest colony in the Americas. It is now the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The magnitude 7.0 earthquake of 2010 left the country totally devastated. It claimed some 250,000 lives, over 300,000 injured and laid waste the capital Port Au Prince and most of southern Haiti.

It had an estimated cost of over US\$ 8 billion in damage and a reconstruction cost of approximately US\$14 billion.

Currently, some 1.3 million people are said, by United Nations (UN) agencies, to be suffering from food insecurity, and 4.6 million from limited access to basic food supplies.

While I am pleased to acknowledge the recent meeting of Lead Heads of Government of CARICOM that took place in Trinidad and Tobago, to specifically find solutions to the many crises which beset Haiti, the international community needs to respond as if Haiti was under invasion, as is the case with Ukraine; or as it did in a post war reconstruction situation as was the case with Europe after World War II, requiring a so called Marshal Plan. Nothing less can overcome the deep-rooted reconstruction challenges facing Haiti.

We therefore urge this UN family to forge an effective, unified response that brings to bear the necessary resources

financial, technical and otherwise, to alleviate the suffering of the Haitian people.

**Mr. President,**

The severe and voluminous impacts of the various challenges that we have been experiencing in recent times, highlights the importance of multilateralism.

As we raise the various issues confronting our individual states, and share our hopes, fears and expectations, let us seek also to offer solutions to our various problems as a united international community eager to realize a sustainable, transformative and fairer future for all.

As I conclude, allow me to reiterate my country's gratitude, to all of our international partners and friendly Governments who have stood with the Commonwealth of Dominica, particularly through our darkest days.

Our journey is one of ‘building back better,’ sustainability and resilience, and with your continued support we look forward to brighter days ahead.

***Mr. President,***

I wish you and all delegates to this 77<sup>th</sup> Session every success in their deliberations.

I Thank you.