

**Statement To the 77
General Assembly of the United Nations
By
The Hon. Dr. Terrance Drew
Prime Minister
Of
St Kitts and Nevis**

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, Distinguished Delegates

I congratulate you on your election as President of the General Assembly of this august body.

I also pause to salute your predecessor in office, His Excellency, Abdulla Shahid, the Foreign Minister of the Maldives for his sterling tenure .

I recognized The Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, for his outstanding stewardship over the past few years .

Mr. President,

It is indeed an honour for me to address this body for the first time since assuming the role of Prime Minister just 44 days ago. I bring

you greetings from the Government and people of Saint Kitts and Nevis and pledge our unswerving support to the ethos of this body.

I have assumed my new responsibilities when the complexities of the multiple and interlocking challenges facing humanity that require from us a renewed commitment to the democratic principle and to multilateralism.

It is clear to me that the tectonic plates of geopolitics and global stability are shifting beneath us.

What are those tectonic shifts?

- It is now certain knowledge that a pathogen can emerge with such lethal power, that it threatens, the very survival of mankind.
- The coincidence in timing of a global pandemic and a war, with the growing calamity of the climate crisis, has exposed the fragility, vulnerability and instability of the global supply chains for food, staples and other essentials.
- Power shifts are taking place in international relations, as the influence of some countries rises and others wanes. With this has come an insistence for reform of the United Nations to

make it more relevant and reflective of the composition of today's world and current power structures, including reform of the anachronistic Security Council.

- The effect and ubiquitous nature of technology is creating change faster than most can manage it.
- Faith in the multilateral system is being eroded, and its capacity to do global good, is being jeopardized by the rise in crass, unbridled nationalism which has shown the powerful to be nonchalant to the suffering of anyone other than their own population.

The State of Multilateral Cooperation

It was the seventh Secretary General , His Excellency Kofi Annan, who reminded us that, "no nation can defend itself against the threats to development entirely on its own;" that "the challenges we face are global, and they demand a global response." This remains true today!

COVID-19 with all its consequences has presented us with a powerful reminder that we are all connected, which compels every nation and every person to be their brothers' and sisters' keepers.

Mr. President,

The United Nations finds itself at a crossroads in our reckoning with history's judgment. Do we want to be the body that abdicated our responsibility to protect the planet? Or the body that debates and postures as the world around us submerges beneath cascading crises? It is my hope that we choose instead to be the body that met the moment and responded to the fierce urgency of now.

We must therefore use this 77th General Assembly - not merely for political posturing - but for resolute recommitment to multilateral cooperation. **For Small Island Developing States, and indeed vulnerable peoples everywhere there can be no international security without climate security.** This requires collective fidelity to multilateral action for our very survival.

I am ready and I am sure that all of us are eager to build a better world through multilateral action, and uphold, with all our will and might, this sacred tenet of the United Nations . Even as geopolitics and great power competition is exacerbating conflict and the climate catastrophe, we must face the hard truth that only through multilateralism will we force the global trajectory toward global peace, prosperity and sustainability.

Climate Action and Security:

Mr. President,

Every country on the planet, national populations have had to confront the reality of climate change. As our planet heats up, so too have the frustrations and impatience of the globe's ordinary citizens, who feel they are losing the fight to make ends meet and secure the future of their children.

Small island developing states and other developing nations experience a reality, plagued by this continuous existential threat. With the passage of every hurricane, every outbreak of war and every global food shortage, we all remain at risk of tipping the balance that we have striven to create over the years.

Thus, it is not enough for us to articulate this grim reality year after year. We must now look to act in ways that provide tailored responses to these vulnerabilities so as to foster true resilience and risk mitigation. Therefore I humbly urge countries to honor the financial commitments made following the COP26 to double contributions to adaptation financing by 2025. A delayed response to these commitments would further imperil our developing nations. Climate financing, resiliency and environmental

conservation must be integrated into national development policies and must be at the forefront of our global development agenda.

Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI):

Mr. President,

This situation cries out for the multilateral system to urgently put in place a multidimensional vulnerability index which takes into consideration the peculiar characteristics and climate vulnerabilities of small island developing states such as mine.

Mr. President,

All countries are environmentally vulnerable; all are socially and economically exposed to exogenous shock, but in the climate-challenged, tourism-dependent countries in the Caribbean Sea, during several consecutive months of every year, run the real risk of a wipe out event . Surely this warrants special consideration.

Caribbean nations are on the "bullet end" of a climate fight we did not cause, do not want, and cannot afford, but are unable to escape.

I, therefore join my brothers and sister leaders in CARICOM in calling for the development of a multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI). Therefore, Saint Kitts and Nevis will use this index in its advocacy for a more appropriate redistribution of development assistance and access to concessional financing.

Education and Transformation Education Summit

Mr. President,

Notwithstanding this injustice we continue to invest in social empowerment programs in order to build resilience in our people and economy. One such area is education which is one

of society's greatest equalizers. Saint Kitts and Nevis reaffirms that access to quality education is a human right and the foundation of sustainable development and thriving societies.

We welcome the Transforming Education Summit that was held earlier this week and I am happy to report that our government has committed to entering a new pact, A New Deal on Education as it were, that will reform, transform and re-invigorate our education system based on equality, access and inclusion. In fact, just a few weeks ago, my government made a decision to

introduce free tertiary education to ensure that all people can have equal access regardless of their socio-economic status.

Other goals for educational reforms include, but are not limited to

1. Incorporating STEAM specialist spaces in all schools;
2. Reintroducing the i-Literacy one-to-one laptop programme;
3. Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education by providing alternative programming and scholarships.

Youth and Women Empowerment

Mr. President,

As part of my government's thrust to mainstream empowerment across all sectors and policies, Saint Kitts and Nevis will continue to put women and youth at the forefront of our social development and all our pursuits including the advancement of the digital economy. We are confident our active inclusion of women and youth in public life through their appointment in our parliament, diplomatic and senior civil service and other decision-making fora; will bear much fruit.

Therefore it is against this backdrop that we pledge our support to the ongoing process of the Declaration of Future Generations

that will culminate in the Summit of the Future next year. And pledge as its leader, my country's active commitment to meeting goal 5 of the SDG and surpassing the goals of Belem De Para in achieving gender equity now and for future generations.

Partnerships

The recent past has proven that we cannot ignore the glaring truth of our interconnectedness as nations in the international community. The world continues to shrink in size, drawing us all nearer to each other as a people, reinforcing the need for global solidarity, international cooperation, and strong and meaningful partnerships.

Taiwan

Mr. President,

We are stronger in the company of our friends, particularly those which share our democratic principles and values! In this body of nations, I re-emphasize our unswerving support for Taiwan's meaningful participation in the UN system. Taiwan has been a long-standing friend and a partner for sustainable development. Their unfailing commitment in this regard since the very day of

my country's independence is consistent with the spirit and intent of Goal 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Mr. President,

I can speak first-hand to what our friendship with the Republic of Cuba and what it means to me and its value to the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis. Cuba has partnered with my own country and many in the developing world in healthcare, education, training and agriculture. We call for an end to the decades long embargo imposed against Cuba.

My country encourages meaningful dialogue in resolving these and other conflicts in countries that are targeted by unfair sanctions that create enduring external and internal hardships.

In closing Mr. President,

We must be bold and grand in the way we forge forward with a promise to leave no one behind. My government and I are prepared to do our utmost for our people, which would be enhanced by multilateralism and the United Nations should afford to this opportunity to all.

The theme for this year's General Assembly was well chosen.

The idea of watershed speaks to significant and transformational change. The challenges faced by the countries of the world and their people, are indeed interlocking and we must resolve them together. The issue for us is, how we will bring that change about for those who most need it.

Mr. President, I am obliged to you.