

**Address By Prime Minister, Hon. Dickon Mitchell at the 78th Session of
The United Nations General Assembly, New York, USA**

Friday, September 22, 2023

78th UNGA Theme: Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity:
Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development
Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all.

BEGINS

INTRODUCTION

H.E. Dennis Francis, President of this 78th Session of the United Nations
General Assembly (UNGA).

H.E. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General

Heads of State and of Government

Heads of Delegation

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen:

Mr. President, please accept my warmest greetings and congratulations on your
election to the Presidency of this 78th Session of the United Nations General
Assembly (UNGA).

I take this opportunity to commit my delegation's fullest support and
cooperation with you and your office as we work towards the fulfilment of the
four (4) priority areas that you have identified; the same being **Peace,**
Prosperity, Progress and **Sustainability**, and all of which, I also view as
important areas in this challenging and dynamic Global Agenda.

I also commend and thank your predecessor Mr. President, His Excellency, Csaba Korosi of Hungary for his leadership and guidance of the last Session of the General Assembly.

Mr. President, it is my privilege to once again, speak from this center podium where one year ago, I addressed the Assembly Hall for the very first time as Prime Minister.

It was exactly fifteen (15) months ago Mr. President, when the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, exercising their democratic right through free and fair elections, voted my government into office on a Transformation agenda that *promised* to bring about fundamental change, that would have a discernible and positive effect on the daily lives of all our citizens.

So here we are Mr. President, exactly one year removed from my own inaugural address to this Assembly, and against the backdrop of this year's 78th Session's theme of, **Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all.**

But what does this all mean, Mr. President, Excellencies, Friends, when we continue to live in a global environment and context where our citizens are still plagued with issues such as hunger, poverty, gender based violence, climate related disasters and other such issues that affect our planet; but especially those that touch and concern such aspirations as us achieving all seventeen of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Against this background, Mr. President, I am pleased and take this opportunity to also announce that Grenada will soon be celebrating its Fiftieth (50th) Anniversary of National Independence, on the 7th of February, 2024. In this regard, it could not be a more fitting occasion for my government and citizens to not only celebrate the upcoming 'golden jubilee' milestone, but also to take the occasion to reflect and look ahead with respect to Grenada's continued role in the United Nations, where we must have, a reimagined and renewed commitment to upholding the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and International Law.

POST COVID PANDEMIC WORLD

Further to and speaking about looking ahead Mr. President, particularly in a post pandemic world, we can report, that Grenada like many others, was not spared the devastating and blunt force trauma effect(s) of the **COVID-19 pandemic** coming to our shores and which took a deadly toll, through the loss of many of the lives of our citizens in our Spice-island.

Still, and notwithstanding the many traumatic experiences of that period Mr. President, a period which saw such the tragic loss of lives, lock downs, mandates, and ultimately some relief through vaccine development, relief and its administration; the resilience of the Grenadian people rang through and ultimately we prevailed as a people, against an invisible enemy who during its reign, took the lives of those whom we knew and called family, our friends, and loved ones- we as a people- survived.

In that regard Mr. President and as the world and international community continue on its way to recovery and rebuilding, and as Grenada reflects on this particular experience, it would be remiss of me if I did not emphasize and remind us all of how important it is to have international cooperation with each other, along with the sharing of resources, information and having continued dialogue through such multilateral forum as we find ourselves gathered here today.

To that end Mr. President, it cannot be overstated how much these last three (3) years have allowed us to hopefully learn from tragedy and adversity as seen during the crisis of the pandemic. We all must never forget that whenever and wherever there is severe challenges and especially human suffering, the United Nations and its members, must come together and respond to such crisis with the greatest urgency through its multilateral efforts and cooperation, so that we can all come to the aid of our neighbors and citizens, in their time of need.

SDG4 - QUALITY EDUCATION

In that regard Mr. President and as Grenada looks towards to its future and casts its eyes upon its own embrace and pursuit, with hopes of achieving all seventeen (17) of the SDGs, I am pleased to highlight and speak briefly on **SDG 4- Quality Education**.

On this front Mr. President, Grenada under my government's leadership has made significant advancements in improving access to 'Quality Education', for all citizens of Grenada.

Further to Mr. President and to ensure that “no one is left behind”, our premier Community College for our youth exiting the secondary school system in Grenada, the T.A. Marryshow Community College or TAMCC, has implemented the ‘Skills to Access the Green Economy Project (SAGE)’, in partnership with a significant member of this body, to allow many of our youth to receive the acquired job related education and training, in a variety of identified vocational disciplines.

Additionally, Mr. President, my government has developed and commenced a ‘Free Tuition Policy’, which allows all students, access to a post- secondary school and tertiary level education at no tuition cost to them as part of our commitment to provide a good ‘Quality Education’ to as many a cross section of our student and wider population, as possible.

SDG 5 – GENDER EQUALITY

Mr. President, Grenada can also speak to its engagement and implementation work with respect to **SDG 5** and the very important issue of **Gender Equality**.

In this regard, my government continues to make numerous advancements towards achieving gender equality including and not limited to having Gender themes reflected in several policy frameworks, including our Medium- term Action Plan (MTAP).

We have implemented ‘The Spotlight Initiative’, which aims to end violence against women and girls, which highlights the ‘all-of-society’ approach required

to advance the attainment of this very important SDG 5. This initiative has come with assistance from the United Nations Development Program whom we thank, and which is “designed to focus attention, coordinate human effort, and strategically apply resources to the implementation of a well-conceived comprehensive national program to contribute to ending family violence and all forms of violence against women and girls in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.” (UNDP, Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, The Spotlight Initiative).

SDG 8 – DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

With respect to **SDG 8** Mr. President, as it pertains to **Decent Work and Economic Growth** for our citizens; and given what we have seen and experienced during the pandemic and now a post pandemic world, where there were disruption(s) to supply chains, economic inflation and recession in many parts, we do acknowledge and recognize that our unemployment rates remain a challenge and there remains much work to be done.

However, and notwithstanding Mr. President, Grenada has sought to mitigate against these harsh realities and push back against these shocks with several projects being implemented including the Land Bank Project, the Grenada-Climate Resilient Water Sector (G-CREWS Project) and the UNDP Climate Resilience Agriculture Programme.

These initiatives and projects Mr. President have served as critical activity areas that have created many forms of employment for our citizens, especially our young people, giving them a renewed sense of hope that they too can have equal access to employment and economic opportunities.

SDG 14 – LIFE BELOW WATER

Looking further Mr. President, and as another example, at the **14th SDG** goal - **Life Below Water**.

Mr. President, Grenada understands all too well how important our oceans are to countries like us who are Big Ocean States (BOS), and where many of our citizens especially in the fishing community, heavily depend on the ocean for their daily sustenance and livelihoods.

As such, my government has embarked on the fiscal Resilience and Blue Growth Development policy Credit Project, which is aimed at giving support to Grenada's transition to a Blue Economy.

Additionally, Mr. President, Grenada has also embarked on the creation of additional Marine Protected Areas, legislative and policy frameworks, including the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan, all geared to protecting the integrity and lending support to marine areas management on our island.

SDG 15 – LIFE ON LAND

In the area of **SDG Number 15** Mr. President- **Life on Land**.

With only a thirty five percent (35%) Forest to total land ratio, Grenada has made advancements in the measures that we have taken to protect our Forests.

Our Forest Policy provides the overarching framework to ensure the resilience and sustainability of this finite and precious green resource through a number of strategic directions; which leads me Mr. President to perhaps the equally important;

SDG Number 17 – PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS

In this regard Mr. President, I am pleased to state that multi-stakeholder partnership has proved invaluable and have paved the way for SDG advancement in Grenada as stakeholders recognize the need for an “all-of-government” and “all -of-society” approach to advancing and attaining Grenada’s Progress towards Sustainable Development.

Finally, Mr. President, allow me further to address the one subject, that is perhaps arguably the single most encompassing and prevailing issue of our time, and it relates to;

SDG Number 13 – CLIMATE ACTION

Mr. President, every year, we the Leaders of these 193 member states of this august institution, gather in New York to give a status update as to the progress that we have made in our respective countries, and the future that we would like to see, as viewed through our own lens coming from the various regions of our international community.

In that context Mr. President; if there is one thing that we can all be certain of, it is the likely occurrence of a climate disaster of some kind among one or several of our member states, and which will have devastating impacts on our citizens, our economies and inevitably affect the state and progress of the impacted country’s development.

Mr. President, last year I called for the escalation of the urgent action that is required by our community of nations, to give specific focus to redoubling our efforts on Climate Action.

In this regard, at this year's Climate Ambition Summit, the Summit was an opportunity for Government leaders, and other partners to present credible and concrete actions to keep the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement alive and deliver climate justice to those on the front lines of the climate crisis.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Synthesis Report (2023) confirmed that global emissions are at their highest levels in human history and only continue to rise. Such increases Mr. President will only continue to wreak havoc on communities, economies, businesses, and create a severe strain on public finances.

Mr. President, states that contribute least to the climate crisis are the ones bearing the heaviest burden and without immediate and deep emissions cuts across the board, I am afraid Mr. President that we are on a trajectory for far worse outcomes if we don't take significant action-today.

Mr. President, as we look forward to the upcoming COP 28 my own region and colleague CARICOM Heads of Government have emphasized the critical importance of urgent efforts to address financing to address the impact of climate change.

These Heads “*also agreed on the need for strong political advocacy from the Region on key action areas to keep the 1.5 temperature goal within reach, focusing on areas of Finance for Adaptation and Loss and Damage, improving Access to Finance for SIDS, De-risking, Debt Sustainability and Innovation as key points*”.

Grenada shares these concerns on these important issues and continues to be and remain vulnerable to the harsh climate crisis and its devastating effects.

Grenada has implemented several Policy Frameworks, such as the National Climate Change Policy and the National Adaptation Plan, which are geared towards assisting in advancing the country’s strategic approach to climate adaptation and building resilience. Adaptation efforts will be scaled up through initiatives such as the Climate Smart Agriculture Program and our second National Determined Contribution, which has set an emission reduction target of forty percent (40%) below 2010 levels.

Against this background and further to our own efforts in Grenada Mr. President, last year at this time, I said this:

“I call on all young people to take action. It is not yet too late to do what is necessary to safeguard our planet for future generations, but the time for action is now. We cannot continue to give lip service to climate change when climate change is showing us every day what it is capable of. ***The reality is, the leaders of today will not be around to feel the consequences of their decisions. It is***

therefore up to our youth to lead the charge for the future they want to see.

This remains true today as it was last year and will remain true for many years.

Today, I make the further clarion call for all member states through their leaders and high-level representatives to take decisive action and do what is necessary to safeguard our planet for future generations, but the time for such action is now, Mr. President. Now is the time for global country leaders to follow through on those commitments made at the multilateral level.

Our goal, as responsible global citizens, should be to leave this planet in as good a condition, if not much better, than we actually found it.

Finally, Mr. President, on issues concerning those of us in the Global South of the Caribbean Archipelago;

THE CARIBBEAN

Mr. President, being conscious of your first priority pillar, that of Peace, we renew our call that the Caribbean region continues to remain a **Zone of Peace** and an environment that continues to facilitate the social, economic and environmental development of all Caribbean states and the world at large.

In this regard, in light of the just concluded successful 'G-77 + China Summit in Havana, Cuba, Grenada reiterates its call for the removal of the US imposed economic, commercial, and financial blockade against **Cuba** and a further call for Cuba to be removed from the US State Department's list of countries that

are co-sponsors of terrorism and be allowed to rejoin and be renamed among the peaceful loving nations of the international community.

Still in our Caribbean Community Mr. President, Grenada remains deeply concerned and must also raise awareness over the deteriorating situation in the rule of law in **Haiti**, and the very troubling escalation of violence in our fellow CARICOM member state.

The urgent support of the international community needs to be ramped up, in particular, in the humanitarian and security areas where the needs are greatest. The need for robust security assistance to counter the rampaging armed gangs is clear, yet the decision to enable this is meandering slowly through the Security Council. CARICOM welcomes the Government of Kenya's willingness to lead such a multi-national force and the offers of support from Rwanda, and from The Bahamas and Jamaica to contribute personnel. The Caribbean Community hopes that the establishment of the multi-national force will receive full endorsement by the United Nations Security Council as a demonstration of the commitment of the international community to support restoration of law and order and improve the humanitarian conditions of the people of Haiti.

Inter-Haitian dialogue is also key to any progress in addressing the multifaceted crisis. CARICOM, for its part, is providing its good offices through an Eminent Persons Group consisting of three former Prime Ministers of the Region to facilitate these efforts. A resolution of the political crisis is also key to free and fair elections to place the country back on a constitutional path and to

open the door to an improved future for its citizens. The people of Haiti deserve no less.

In that regard Mr. President, Grenada calls on all friends of Haiti and the Good offices of the Secretary General to continue to support the people of Haiti.

With respect to the **Republic of Venezuela** Mr. President, we further reiterate and also remain resolute in our call for an end to the imposition of unilateral coercive measures against Venezuela, contrary to the rules and principles of International Law and the Charter of the United Nations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion Mr. President,

With a challenging, complex, yet dynamic global agenda, it is still incumbent upon us as global leaders, to still look to our future and world, with a renewed sense of hope and sincere optimism.

It is with that renewed sense of hope that we must continue to press forward and aim to achieve not just the seventeen (17) SDGS of this multilateral forum, but we must seek to dramatically affect for the greater good, the human lives that we have been entrusted to lead.

It is a position that I do not take for granted Mr. President, but envision, along with my government, that the pursuit of those goals pursuant to the 2030 Agenda can be met and they will be met. With steadfast commitment, and shared vision and cooperation from all of us, so that we can indeed achieve Mr.

President, **Peace, Prosperity, Progress** and **Sustainability**- for all our citizens and all peaceful loving nations represented and assembled in this great Assembly Hall.

Thank you.

ENDS