



Statement by
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of Antigua and Barbuda
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of
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of
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Mr. President
Secretary-General
Distinguished Delegates

Today, we all stand at the edge of a precipice.

Never before has humanity been confronted with such stark choices: to end wars or condemn humanity to endless suffering; to eliminate poverty or watch millions starve; to act on climate change or doom future generations to a scorched planet.

The choices we make today - here in this Assembly and in every institution of governance - will shape the survival of entire nations and the future of our world.

For small states like Antigua and Barbuda, these are not distant realities. They are existential threats.

Our islands are on the frontlines of a climate catastrophe we did not cause; a debt crisis we did not create, and conflicts in which we have no part.

And yet, we suffer the heaviest toll. The world is at a pivotal point, and inaction is no longer an option for any of us.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are the first to suffer, but we will not be the last. All will be consumed, if we continue to dither and delay.

SIDS have learned to fight for our survival against the rising seas and violent storms.

But today, we must also fight for something greater: the survival of justice, of equity, peace and human dignity itself.

The time for games and lofty rhetoric has passed. We demand committed, concrete action and we demand it now! We do so not only for ourselves, but for all of humanity.

The Fourth United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4), is the pinnacle of monumental achievement, a milestone that marks not only our collective progress as SIDS, but also our unrelenting resolve. SIDS4 gave birth to the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS, the (ABAS) - a renewed declaration for resilient prosperity.

This Agenda is not just a roadmap for the future; it is a lifeline for now.

For SIDS, the ABAS represents the difference between thriving and perishing; it's our road map to a prosperous future.

At its core is the SIDS Centre of Excellence, built by SIDS, for SIDS. This center is intended to be more than just an institution; it is an instrument for meaningful change; a center for ground breaking technologies, revolutionary processes and pioneering solutions.

With its Global Data Hub, Innovation and Technology Mechanism, Island Investment Forum and Debt Sustainability Support Service (DSSS); the Centre of Excellence can transform how we adapt to our vulnerabilities, and set a path for resilient prosperity.

However, this vision cannot succeed in isolation. We need the cooperation and support of the global community to ensure its success.

Without global cooperation, our hope of a secure future within our own countries will crumble under the weight of inaction.

That is why, today, I call for the unwavering commitment of the international community to the Centre's success. Our survival depends on it.

Mr. President,

Climate change is not an abstract, or academic threat. For my people, and the people of SIDS, it is a persistent and destructive reality.

Intense hurricanes are now an annual terror. Coastal erosion is wiping away our productive areas for tourism and agriculture.

The climate crisis is not on the horizon. It is here, now, burning through our ecosystems, flooding our villages, and leaving us with fewer tomorrows.

And yet, we find ourselves at an absurd situation: continuing to subsidize the very industries that are accelerating our destruction.

Fossil fuel companies have become the architects of our demise, while generating ostentatious profits for their owners.

We must fight to end this madness, in protection of our planet and in the interest of humanity.

We need a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, to halt the reckless destruction of our environment, to end fossil fuel subsidies and to chart a course toward a sustainable future, with a negotiated and graduated transition.

Let COP29 be the moment we draw a line in the sand. Let it be known – we can no longer afford the luxury of delay.

While we recognize that fossil fuels still play a role in the energy security of many countries, and we do not expect their production to cease overnight; we should not support companies extracting oil and gas to continue generating extravagant profits at the expense of our planet. It is only fair and just that these companies pay a global levy to fund mitigation efforts and compensation for the damage they continue to inflict.

This is not a punishment. It's climate justice. It is a moral and legal responsibility in which the polluter pays. And the time for action is now.

While we face the climate emergency, we are also drowning in a sea of plastic pollution, that is choking our oceans and devastating our biodiversity.

It is no longer a question of if we act, but how swiftly we can mobilize against this threat.

Our nations must commit to a binding treaty, as required by UNEA Resolution 5.14, to put an end to plastic pollution and safeguard our world's most fragile ecosystems.

Let us not allow this tightening suffocation of our planet to continue.

Distinguished Delegates,

Antigua and Barbuda, in concert with other Small Island Developing States, has played a leading role in the pursuit of climate justice.

At COP26 in 2021, together with Tuvalu, we established the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law.

Today, an expanded membership from the Caribbean and the Pacific, stands united in our demand for accountability.

In 2022, the Commission sought the first-ever advisory opinion from the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, on the obligations of states to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

In May of this year, the Tribunal rendered a historic opinion, affirming that major polluters are under a legally binding obligation to protect the oceans - and by extension, Small Island States - from catastrophic harm.

This precedent sets the stage for the advisory proceedings now before the International Court of Justice, initiated under the leadership of Vanuatu, with the co-sponsorship of Antigua and Barbuda and other SIDS.

It is remarkable that the smallest nations, are those driving this global response to the greatest threat to human survival. Yet, despite our efforts, the COP process continues to fail us.

Instead of limiting global warming to 1.5°C - an essential threshold for survival - the world is hurtling towards a disastrous 2.8°C rise.

This is nothing less than a death sentence for Small Island States, but it is also a harbinger of grief for the rest of our planet.

We must demand that major polluters not only respect their obligations under international law, but also compensate us, for the loss and damages we have suffered.

Those who preach about a rule-based international order must now lead by example.

Rules must apply equally to all, including the mighty; not just to the poor and powerless.

At COP29, we expect no further delay in the capitalization and operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund, for which we have struggled so long and so hard. Equity and fairness demand it.

Mr. President,

The fight for survival is not just about climate - it is also about financial justice, reparatory justice, other injustices and equity.

The international financial system is skewed, outdated, and unjust - punishing the most vulnerable while rewarding the already rich and prosperous with favorable terms for their financial instruments.

For too long, small states like mine have been shackled by debt we did not cause; debt that arose from recovery spending on recurring disasters that are beyond our control.

We cannot achieve climate justice without addressing the structural inequities in the International Financial Architecture.

It is time to lift the burdens that keep us bound to the past and unable to invest in our future.

The SIDS Debt Sustainability Support Service is a critical mechanism that can provide tailored solutions, utilizing debt for climate swaps, debt relief, repurposing of SDRs and carbon pricing funding to help us escape the cycle of unsustainable debt.

This is not charity - it is the justice of financial inclusion.

And in the end, by remedying past injustices, it will establish a world, that is fairer, more just and more at peace with itself.

Excellencies,

The adoption of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI), which Antigua and Barbuda was honoured to help advance in this organization, offers a path towards correcting the imbalance of unjust treatment accorded to small and vulnerable nations.

It is a vital tool, designed to acknowledge the complexities we face - not just in terms of limited economic capacity and other structural vulnerabilities and a lack of resilience, but also in our exposure to myriad external shocks.

International Financial Institutions must act on this, integrating the MVI into their policies to ensure that support is targeted where it is needed most.

The work has been done; the case has been made; the arguments are irrefutable.

There can be no just and sustaining reform of the World Bank, other IFI's and multilateral banks without their effective implementation and use of the MVI.

There can be no legitimate excuse for failing to utilize the MVI. As I said before, the arguments for its use are irrefutable and just.

Mr. President,

These initiatives, which SIDS have taken, are a small component of the wider and more fundamental necessity for reform of the International Financial Architecture, to provide greater funding accessibility and better terms to include lower interest rates and longer maturity transformations.

They are part of the wider need for change, to effectively address the historic imbalances against SIDS, including financial exclusion.

The international financial institutions, and the nations that sit on their controlling boards, must develop bespoke funding instruments that meet the needs of small vulnerable states and other developing countries, taking into consideration their vulnerabilities and lack of resilience.

Mr. President,

We must also recognize that the principles of justice and equity we champion here, apply equally to all nations and are conditions precedent for a peaceful world.

In this spirit, Antigua and Barbuda calls for the end of the designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism and for the lifting of the long-standing, senseless embargo that has restricted its economic development.

The time has come to cast off the chains of this outdated measure, which no longer serves the interests of our modern, interconnected world.

Let us work together toward a future built on mutual respect and cooperation, where Cuba, like all nations, can fully participate in the global community.

This is not a matter of politics; it is a matter of fairness and human dignity.

The delegitimization of governments based on ideological differences, utilizing mis-information and disinformation including atrocity propaganda, serves no useful purpose, but creates unnecessary tensions and conflicts.

Let's embrace and respect our differences, standing in solidarity with each other in defense of global peace and prosperity.

Excellencies,

I wish now to address the grave issue of small arms and light weapons (SALW) that are routinely exported from wealthy nations to our shores, creating havoc and instability.

I call on the United States and other small arms and light weapons producing countries, to put systems in place to curb the exportation of these lethal weapons to our shores. They are causing immense harm.

This issue is now emerging as a public health epidemic among SIDS, to the extent, that I hereby make the call for a High-Level Meeting at the 80th UNGA, to debate the threats of these weapons to peace and security and to devise solutions.

Antigua and Barbuda cannot remain silent as innocent lives are destroyed and generations are condemned to fear and hatred.

The events unfolding in the Middle East, particularly the conflict between Israel, Hamas, and Hezbollah, are deeply troubling.

The violence is destabilizing the entire region and reverberating across the world. Every missile fired, every life lost, deepens wounds already too many to bear. The violations of international humanitarian law are alarming.

We call on all parties to end the suffering, by sitting down at a table of peace, where sincere negotiations can lead to a lasting solution.

We believe that the only sustainable resolution is the creation of two sovereign states, with borders respected and rights upheld.

It is time for the people of this region - and all conflict zones, to end these conflicts and to give peace a chance.

From Gaza to Sudan, Ukraine to Yemen, the scars of conflict run deep, leaving devastation in their wake. The anguish of families torn apart by war reverberates across the globe, and it is our collective humanity that bleeds.

Conflict kills the victims of bullets and bombs, but it also diminishes all mankind.

On September 17th, inspired by the Secretary-General's impassioned call for peace, I wrote to him proposing an initiative that transcends borders, language, and conflict.

With that letter, I transmitted a Concept Note, setting out a proposal for holding International Music Concerts for Peace, across every region of the world.

This initiative is intended not only to raise our global voices in a unified chorus against the horrors of war and other conflicts, but also to raise critical funds to support displaced persons and those who

continue to suffer.

Music is a universal language. It speaks to the soul in ways that words cannot.

In moments when words fall short, music carries our collective cries for peace and justice. This would be more than a performance.

It would be a global appeal, a powerful demonstration that peace is not just an ideal - it is an absolute necessity; a survival imperative for this and future generations.

I call on all nations large and small, to support the concept of International Music Concerts for Peace.

Mr. President,

The world is crumbling under the weight of crises - poverty, wars, pandemic and the climate devastation. We are at a defining moment, and the choices we make now will determine the fate of every nation, large and small.

We can end these grave challenges, but it requires more than words. It demands decisive, concrete, unified action.

Antigua and Barbuda, like all small states, does not stand on the sidelines.

We stand on the principles of peace and love for our common humanity and in the path of struggle against these global predicaments we did not create.

Yet we fight not just for ourselves, but for a world where justice reigns, where peace endures, and where future generations inherit not a planet in peril; but one that prospers.

The world must act now, for the choices we make today will resonate through history.

Let us choose peace. Let us choose justice.

And let us choose the survival of our one human race, in our one homeland - the planet Earth.

Thank you.