



*Permanent Mission
of Barbados to
the United Nations*



Official Statement delivered by

**The Hon. Mia Amor Mottley, S.C. M.P.
Prime Minister of Barbados**

at the

**General Debate
79th Session of the UN General Assembly
New York**

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Mr. President, Colleagues, Friends,

Those of us here today, representing our brothers and sisters the world over, have endured four years of poly-crises. As the children of Mother Earth, we continue to wrestle with the Climate Crisis. As a human family, we grapple with the legacy of the pandemic. As a digitally connected people, we are now daily confronted by multiple theaters of war and armed conflict. Citizens of every country struggle to contain the rising cost of living. And we are all now threatened by the second, but silent pandemic of Anti-Microbial Resistance together with a growing incidence of death and disability from chronic non-communicable diseases.

If ever there was a time to pause and reset, it is now.

Collectively, as an international community and individually, as leaders in each of our countries, we must now deliver new opportunities and solutions to these crises which dampen economic growth, restrict the ambitions of our peoples and numb our sense of the beauty and goodness the world has to offer.

The reset for which I am calling and indeed, all our citizens are demanding, must see an end to all forms of discrimination. That rules and institutions today exist, which create first and second class citizens depending on your nation of origin, militate against trust, credibility and hope and fosters a crisis of confidence in the existing international order which must become inclusive and responsive for all.

Neo-colonialist structures which reflect and perpetuate an old world order characterized by racism, classism and misogyny, while ignoring the legitimate aspirations of billions, will not help to foster hope or trust.

We must ensure that global institutions give developing countries, especially small vulnerable ones like my own, seats at the tables of decision-making where we can be seen, heard, become active agents in our own cause and lead our own development paradigms.

We are reminded that 2024 is the final year of the UN's Decade for people of African Descent. Much has been achieved, but the "recognition, justice and development for people of African Descent," promised by the Decade has, to say the least, not yet been fully realized.

It is for this reason that Barbados and the Caribbean Community join the growing chorus for the immediate proclamation of a second decade, to complete the unfinished work and address the matter of reparations for slavery and colonialism. This is a complex but necessary conversation. And the Caribbean Community is resolute that it must happen. Its resolution lies in a multi-generational approach in the same way that the 20 million pounds sterling debt incurred for the compensation of slave in the nineteenth century was only repaid in twenty first century - almost 200 years later.

Mr. President,

Of necessity, the reset must be characterized by institutional reform which has to start in this United Nations. Councils which suggest that some are full members and others are only part-members, part-time, or occasional members, have no place in the twenty first century. The anger and mistrust of our citizens in institutions, in leaders, and in multilateralism and its processes which exclude, while yielding much talk and little action, is very real.

And nowhere is reform, and consequentially, trust and hope, more important than in relation to the global financial architecture. Restricted access to capital, its disproportionately high cost, it's inadequate scale and the overwhelming burden of debt, are now combining to force governments in the world's poorest countries and frankly, across many vulnerable middle income countries, to devote more resources to debt service than to health, education, and infrastructure combined.

For far too many members of the human family, to paraphrase Bob Marley, “cold ground is their bed and rock is their pillow.” Too many millions go to bed with their bellies hungry. And too many have no bed. Our reset must therefore collectively build a common agenda that reflects and reinforces our shared humanity. It is that shared humanity which binds us together.

Mr. President,

Our African brothers and sisters got it right with their principle of *Ubuntu*, “*I am because you are; I am because we are.*” My wellbeing is tied to yours and our collective wellbeing is connected to Mother Earth’s. This *best* voices the approach needed to give expression to the reset.

There are however, glimpses of hope.

We have, for example, on Monday agreed on a Pact of the Future. We have agreed on a Global Digital Compact. We have agreed on a Declaration for Future Generations. All of this rests on the Common Agenda that the Secretary General had set out.

We have also yesterday agreed in a High Level Meeting on a political Declaration on Antimicrobial Resistance. Following on the intervention of the Bridgetown Initiative, and the Paris Pact for People and the efforts of many, hope is also evident in the beginnings of reform of the international financial architecture.

These are all important steps, but we cannot take our eyes off the prize.

Barbados' call for a fundamental reset, includes attitudes as much as actions or reforms.

Heads of Government are in agreement that we must trigger national development agendas of transformation with both speed and scale. However, a failure to act with clarity of purpose and political will retards progress on the front of much needed reform within International Financial Institutions if they are to be equal to the current challenges of Member States and if we are not to perpetuate the discriminatory practices that result in undermining the transformational opportunities.

Friends, this, is precisely why we are launching a third iteration of the Bridgetown Initiative, which identifies three key principles.

First, we must change the rules of the international financial system and reform its governance and instruments.

Secondly, we must shockproof vulnerable economies by dealing with debt and liquidity in a comprehensive, development focused manner.

Thirdly, we must augment financing by boosting country capacity to invest in resilience by several means, including the rechanneling of Special Drawing Rights through our multilateral development partners. Indeed we must address the challenge of how we secure the global public commons and how we fund it. It is not only the climate crisis and loss of biodiversity but all of the other global challenges that we face. Mr. President, these considerations are of fundamental importance to the sustainable existence of future generations.

Mr. President,

The SIDS Agenda is another story of promises made but not kept. Thirty years ago, the international community gathered in Barbados to take action - for the first time – on the unique challenges faced by small island developing states (SIDS). We birthed in my home country, the first ever global agenda for SIDS which became known as the Barbados Programme of Action.

I thank Mauritius for its Strategy of Implementation, Samoa for its Pathway, as carriers of the baton of a development agenda for small island developing states. In the intervening years, in the face of multiple global crises from health to climate to finance, the vulnerabilities of SIDS have become more pronounced. In May of this year, we gathered in Antigua and Barbuda for the fourth international conference on SIDS. I call on the international community and multilateral system to let us work together to ensure that the promise created in Bridgetown in 1994, is realized through delivery on the ABAS, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS 2024.

Let me use this opportunity to inform that, two days ago, Barbados took over the presidency of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) (the V20 countries) from Ghana, whose President we thank for the excellent stewardship of the Group over the past two years. The priorities of my term will be the multiple dimensions of climate change, the impact of climate change on human health, and the issue of debt and climate. I invite all climate vulnerable United Nations Member States, that have not yet done so, to join the other 70 countries that are in the CVF in order to strengthen our collective voice, enhance our efforts at advocacy and address the climate crisis with urgency. I commend to you the Declaration of the Leaders of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, adopted on September 25, Wednesday of this week.

Mr. President,

Above all else, a reset is needed to secure a global peace.

There are few areas where the world is more in need of the United Nations and our collective action than in the areas of peace and security.

The conflicts that have engulfed Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar, Israel and Gaza and now Lebanon are but the tip of an iceberg of death, violence and instability. Even the longest war in history came to an end. These too will come to an end but the question is at what costs and with how much loss of life. Innocent people are paying the price with their lives.

Unless we address the root causes of these wars and the manner in which they are sustained we will know more than we ever needed to know of war and the rumors of war.

The transmittal of these scenes of horror in real time into people's bedrooms and living rooms will trigger 2 extreme reactions, neither of which are acceptable - the desensitizing of ordinary people to the loss of lives, especially of innocent children and women on the one hand and the anger and inclination for vengeance that it spawns. We need peace. We must work for peace.

In the midst of this maelstrom, Barbados took the step this year, of recognizing and establishing diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine. We did this because it is clear to us that the State and people of Palestine are entitled to full recognition by, integration into, and support from the international community. We join with others in congratulating the State of Palestine on taking a seat among UN member states on September 10, 2024.

We condemn the actions of Hamas. We also strongly deplore the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza which is the result of the disproportionate use of force by Israel. There is no justification for it. That is why treaties exist governing the rules of engagement for war.

A two-state solution, no matter how elusive it may appear to be now, is the only answer.

We insist that the killing in Ukraine must stop. The people of the Ukraine must be allowed to live within the internationally recognized boundaries of their state, in peace and free from the threat or use of force.

There must be a singular commitment to building the peace.

Mr. President,

My own region has not escaped the scourge of instability and violence. The Americas do not constitute a theater of war, but we are today witnessing an unprecedented escalation in the number and caliber of assault weapons which are finding themselves in the hands of criminals who are wreaking havoc on the legal systems and societies of the small island states of the Caribbean and the countries of Central and Latin America. This scourge, caused by guns manufactured in the United States, also requires a fundamental reset. The right of persons to bear arms in countries not engaged in military conflict should not be an opening to accept assault weapons.

The fate of the people of Haiti continues to be at the center of the concerns of the Caribbean region.

The global community now has an opportunity for an essential reset with how it addresses its relationship with Haiti and support a transformational change in that sister Caribbean nation, by providing the people and government of Haiti with the full support of the international community in the short and long term.

That starts by extending the mandate of the Multinational Security Support force, escalating the work of the UN, and deploying all the tools of bilateral, regional and global cooperation, including by meeting, and then significantly increasing, the pledged funds to assist with the stabilization and restoration of Haiti.

The Caribbean Community has been working hard to support our largest member state; including through the efforts of the Eminent Persons Group of former CARICOM Prime Ministers which has been deeply involved in the search for political consensus in Haiti.

Please let me pause to salute the remarkable leadership of Kenya. After many delays, and in what represents a historical precedent, an African country has taken the lead in helping to tackle a peace and security challenge beyond its own continent.

Mr President,

I must also observe that the continued embargo on Cuba, and the unjust designation of that country as a State sponsor of terrorism, flies in the face of everything we know about Cuba. Around the world and especially in the Caribbean, including in Barbados, Cuba has been a valuable partner across a range of areas of common interest, none more so than in the field of public health. It is time to lift the cruel and unjust embargo, condemned every year by this very Assembly. We pray that the people of Cuba and the people of Florida will recover from the devastation of Hurricane Helene as we have held the people of Nigeria in our prayers after the deadly floods. We have had to work assiduously with our own people in Grenada and Carriacou and Petit St Vincent, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica and my own country.

The Season of Superlatives with its floods and droughts, its hurricanes and fires will take the lives and livelihoods of so many. The Climate Crisis is hitting us almost weekly across the globe. The deniers need a reset - a reset that will admit of the absolute necessity of collective action from us all to save our way of life and our planet.

Mr. President,

At the start of this week the skies were dark. They no longer are.

We leave New York, noting that the clouds are lifting, conscious that the sun is peeping through, filling us with a sense of renewed hope that a reset is not only possible but necessary.

That hope springs from the Pact for the Future and the many declarations that we have made, the terms in which my fellow leaders spoke, in essence capturing the concept of reset, even if they did not so call it.

It is as if we all truly understand and accept the challenge of rising to solve the major difficulties and redress the wrongs that have plagued our generation and our planet.

Recognition of the need for the reset is the first step; eternal vigilance must be a companion as we take the steps to transform our attitudes, our institutions, our rules to be fit for purpose to the needs of our people and countries in this the 3rd decade of the 21st century.

Mr. President,

I can think of no better way to conclude than with a song by Barbadian calypsonian, Edwin Yearwood, which I find truly appropriate:

*“A voice in my head keep talk to me
It tells me the road is long
It tells me we must be strong
Roll with the pain and strife
Today is the start of the rest of your life.”*

May the new hope fostered here this week, signal the start of a New Deal for the people and countries of the world whose voices and presence have been recognized too often as mere statistics and not with the human dignity that is their birth right and their conferred right from these United Nations.

Mr. President, I thank you.
