



Remarks at 79th Session of United Nations General Assembly

Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis

Hon Dr Terrance Drew

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Mr President, Secretary-General Guterres, esteemed colleagues, excellencies, my fellow citizens of our twin-island Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis, and friends from every corner of our shared planet.

Today, I rise on behalf of my small island developing state, and yet in truth, I speak for the many small island nations—large ocean states—that know too well the high cost of inaction. We are small, yes, but our voices carry the weight of rising seas, thundering storms, and livelihoods teetering on the edge of erasure. A sustainable future for SIDS demands more from us all.

Let me begin by paying tribute to His Excellency Dennis Francis, whose leadership and Presidency of the 78th session demonstrated the fierce determination of the Caribbean. We stand ready to drive the changes necessary for a sustainable, secure world. Thank you for your sterling leadership, Mr President.

I must also acknowledge Secretary-General Guterres, who, with unflinching resolve, has championed justice, equity, and hope. This past year tested our commitment to peace and security, yet it also revealed the vast opportunities we must seize if we are to steer humanity toward a better way.

Mr. President, I congratulate you on your election as the President of this 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly. We have great confidence in your leadership as you guide us with the theme, *“Unity and diversity for advancing peace, sustainable development, and human dignity, everywhere and for all.”*

As we convene here in this hallowed hall, I recall the words of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan: *“The future of peace and prosperity that we seek for all the world's peoples needs a foundation of tolerance, security, equality, and justice.”* That foundation is fragile, but it is essential. And it is crumbling under the weight of neglect, greed and abuse of power.

GLOBAL DIPLOMACY NEEDS A HEAVY DOSE OF HUMANITY

Seventy-nine years ago, in the wake of war’s devastation, visionaries sought to build a world where diplomacy and dialogue could triumph over destructive intolerance. Yet, today, we stand on the precipice of a perilous return to a world where peace is kept at gunpoint, where weapons are romanticized, and violence is exalted in the pursuit of absolute power.

We need more than diplomatic platitudes. We need a humanity steeped in decency, justice, equity and inclusivity. We must rise from these chambers, not resigned to the idea that the children of Haiti, Congo, Sudan, and Palestine are less deserving of the rights and freedoms that we enjoy. We are all one people, one world. We cannot have peace without justice, nor justice without true, solid equality.

RISING TIDES, RISING THREATS

In the Caribbean, our lived reality is of rising tides washing away our hopes, of unforgiving heat setting ablaze our dreams. We pray for rain and receive the flood, dragging our homes and our future to the abyss.

When the guns flood our communities, tearing children from their mothers' arms, it is a collective cry for action.

When the Global South starves while food wastage continues unabated, we must be shaken from our complacency.

The harsh truth is that the world is becoming mortally insecure. We stand on disappearing shores. We are besieged by storms natural and man-made. Corporate greed, colonial arrogance, and unchecked consumerism have torn apart our social contract with each other. We are no longer at peace with Nature.

SECURITY CANNOT EXIST WITHOUT SUSTAINABILITY

The greatest delusion we feed ourselves is that security and sustainability are separate endeavours. They are, in fact, intertwined. We cannot build secure nations while allowing the climate crisis to rob future generations of their birthright. Security is more than an absence of conflict; it is the presence of dignity, of justice, and hope.

Generations ago, the Labour Movement in Saint Kitts and Nevis paved the way for our people's emancipation—an emancipation built on the principles of social, economic, and human dignity. Today, I echo their call: We must DO better. We must BE better. Our ambitions must be grander, our vision clearer.

When we say, ***“leaving no one behind: acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development, and human dignity***

for present and future generations” it cannot be a hollow phrase. It must be a sacred commitment —a pledge to every soul, from the wealthiest nation to the smallest island state. For when the waters rise in the South, even the North will eventually drown. When the forests burn in the North, the South too will choke from the smoke. For it is one Planet; one Human Race.

THE SDGs: A LIFELINE FOR OUR FUTURE

The pandemic has left scars that still fester, and global economic fragmentation threatens to deepen the divides between us. For small island states like mine, the failure to meet these goals is not just a disappointment; it is a death sentence. The clock is ticking, and we cannot afford to wait any longer.

Today, the Caribbean braces for an intense hurricane season, facing the escalating fury fueled by warming oceans and unprecedented storms. Our brothers and sisters in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, are still recovering from the devastation of Hurricane Beryl, which became the earliest-formed Category Five hurricane on record this past July. In the Pacific, our colleagues remain exposed to the incessant battering of typhoons that ravage their islands. And as I speak, the southeast United States is being pounded by hurricane Helene. Lives and livelihoods hang in the balance, as entire communities brace for the next assault.

Hoteliers in my own country of Saint Kitts and Nevis have approached our government, stating with a sense of dread, that they may soon no longer be able to market themselves as beach resorts. Our famous beaches, once the lifeblood of our tourism-driven economy, are steadily disappearing under the relentless rise of the sea. The sands that once beckoned visitors from across the globe are now receding, swallowed

by seas which continue to rise. The loss will be irreversible if we do not act.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were meant to shield us from such devastation, offering a progressive agenda to build resilience and safeguard our citizens. Yet despite their promise, according to the UN's 2024 SDGs Report, only 17 percent of the targets are on track. Nearly half are showing minimal or moderate progress, and over one-third have stalled or even regressed. The clock is ticking, and we must do more than observe its passage—we must act before these realities become permanent fixtures in our collective future.

INVITATION TO SHAPE THE FUTURE TOGETHER: GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE ISLANDS SUMMIT 2025

In May 2025, the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis will proudly co-host the *Global Sustainable Islands Summit with Island Innovation*, a pivotal event dedicated to advancing sustainable development on islands across the globe. Titled "*Sustainable Future for Island Communities*," this summit will build on the momentum of the SIDS4 Conference held in 2024, tackling the pressing challenges island nations face. This summit will be a call to action, a space where we shape practical solutions and partnerships that ripple far beyond our shores. Our islands are the sentinels of climate change and the proving ground for sustainable development. It is with this spirit of shared responsibility and urgent action that I extend a heartfelt invitation to all leaders of island nations gathered here to come, to engage, and to commit to meaningful change.

ADOPTION OF THE MVI SHOWS WHAT'S POSSIBLE WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER

A recent and commendable stride toward equity and inclusion has been the adoption of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI). This serves as a powerful testament to the potential of multilateralism when it is both purposeful and effective. Saint Kitts and Nevis stands with the Caribbean Community and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in welcoming resolution 78/322, while urging this esteemed body to rally the necessary political will and resources to drive its implementation across international financial institutions and multilateral development banks.

For us small island developing states, the MVI is not just another metric; it is a lifeline, offering a means to cushion the relentless blows of climatic and economic crises that disproportionately affect us. Its full implementation will demonstrate to the world that the United Nations, and by extension the global system, remains committed to uplifting those most vulnerable. It will restore trust in a system that must not only recognize vulnerability but actively work to address it.

REFORMING GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: A CALL FOR JUSTICE

The time has come to reshape the United Nations, to reform its structures so that they reflect the realities of our modern world. Too many voices remain unheard, too many nations marginalized. The UN Security Council must include representation from the regions most vulnerable to the threats of our time—Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa.

Nowhere is this change more urgently needed than in the international financial architecture. Saint Kitts and Nevis stands in solidarity with the Government of Barbados in its fight for financial and climate justice, pledging our full support for the Bridgetown Initiative. This bold framework demands a reformation of global finance, making it more

responsive to the unique vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States. We cannot build resilience without first ensuring that the international system works for the most vulnerable among us.

SUSTAINABLE ZONES OF PEACE AND SECURITY

In the Caribbean, we continue to call for and guard our zone of peace. The Argyle Declaration serves as a shining example of how we in the Caribbean manage security challenges. We go back to basics: we talk to each other. Specifically, the Declaration has been instrumental in facilitating dialogue between Venezuela and Guyana, demonstrating that even the most complex disputes can be navigated through peaceful means. This model of engagement—one of dialogue and cooperation—is the very essence upon which this institution was founded. The international community would do well to follow this approach and inject new life into our diplomacy.

To this end, I reiterate CARICOM's call for an unconditional ceasefire in Gaza, to put an end to the suffering. The only pathway to peace and to secure fundamental human rights and dignity is through the two-state solution.

HAITI

As we face these global challenges, we cannot forget Haiti. Haiti, the beacon of resilience and courage, stands at the crossroads of its next chapter. Saint Kitts and Nevis, alongside the Caribbean Community, firmly supports the work of the National Transitional Council as it strives to create an environment conducive to a multi-stakeholder political solution. Haiti was there for the downtrodden of the world, lighting the path toward freedom for many, and now the world must be there for Haiti. Not because it is a place of sorrow, but because it remains a symbol of human endurance and defiance against injustice. With the

establishment of the Multinational Security Support Mission, the Caribbean Community seeks to usher in a new day for Haiti's families—a day where schools become places of learning, hospitals are places of healing, and markets are not arsenals for gangs, but havens for community and prosperity. Haiti's future is not only one of security but one of sustainability, and we must rally to give it the peace it deserves.

CUBA

Year after year, this body sends a strong message to the people of Cuba. The embargo that has isolated Cuba for decades is illegal and continues to be a stain on our collective conscience. Saint Kitts and Nevis joins the Caribbean Community in calling for an end to this unjust embargo and for Cuba's removal from the State Department's list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. Cuba has long been a friend to the Caribbean, its doctors and educators exemplifying true philanthropy. Instead of denigrating this island, we should elevate and learn from its sustainable solutions that have empowered their people and, in turn, the region. A stronger, more sustainable Cuba enhances the security and sustainability of the Caribbean.

TAIWAN

In the same breath, we must not forget Taiwan. The people of Taiwan have proven, time and again, their firm commitment to sustainable development. The theme of this Assembly, "leaving no one behind," compels us to ensure Taiwan's inclusion in the work of the United Nations System, particularly in the World Health Organization and the International Civil Aviation Organization. Taiwan's leadership in innovation and technology is not just an asset; it is a necessity for the global community to meet the challenges of tomorrow. The United Nations must extend its vision to include Taiwan, a nation whose exclusion undermines the very principles we stand for: peace, sustainable development, and human dignity.

CONCLUSION: A MOONSHOT FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Mr President, esteemed colleagues, Saint Kitts and Nevis stands before you today, not seeking pity, but partnerships. We are on a transformative journey to become the Western Hemisphere's first Sustainable Island State, guided by seven pillars: Water Security, Energy Transition, Food Security, Sustainable Industry, Sustainable Settlements, Circular Economy, and Social Protection.

We are taking bold, tangible actions:

- Building renewable energy desalination plants for a reliable 24/7 water supply.
- Aggressively advancing geothermal energy on our sister isle of Nevis, with the goal of a unified, sustainable energy grid for both islands.
- Constructing our first, modern, climate-smart hospital.
- Building climate-smart, affordable housing solutions, ensuring that our people have a safe, sustainable place to call home.
- Finalizing one of the Caribbean's largest solar-plus-storage projects.
- We are on track to meet CARICOM's 25 by 25 agenda, reducing our food imports and bolstering local food production.
- We created a Children's Medical Fund to ensure that disadvantaged families can access vital medical care for their children abroad.
- We continue to advance education beyond our universal, compulsory system, promoting lifelong learning as key to national development.

My friends, we stand at a crossroads. We can no longer afford the luxury of inaction. We must meet the moment with the courage it

demands. We must reject business as usual and embrace a new path forward—one that values people over profit, one that prioritizes the planet over power. As we gather in this assembly, let us remember: we are all stewards of this fragile world. The rising tides do not respect borders, and the fires of conflict burn without discrimination.

For Saint Kitts and Nevis, for the Caribbean, for every small island nation whose future hangs in the balance—I ask you to stand with us. Let our voices rise like the oceans that surround us, powerful and unyielding, calling for a future where peace is not just the absence of war, but the presence of justice, of sustainability, of hope.

Together, let us seize this moment and shape the future. Together, let us stand proud and strong.

LET US ACT NOW!

Thank you.