



Commonwealth of Dominica

Statement by

Her Excellency Sylvanie Burton, DAH,
President of the Commonwealth of Dominica

On the Occasion of the 80th Session
of the
United Nations General Assembly

**Theme: “Better Together: 80 years and more for
Peace, Development and Human Rights.”**

Thursday, 25th September 2025
United Nations Headquarters
New York

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mabrika! Mabrika!

I bring you greetings in my native Kalinago language, the language of the first people of the Caribbean whom I am proud to call my ancestors.

Madam President,

On behalf of the Government and People of the Commonwealth of Dominica, I am pleased to congratulate you, my fellow woman, on your appointment to guide the affairs of the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, a responsibility for which you are eminently qualified. We wish you every success in your new role!

Excellencies, I address you at a pivotal time in the history of this organization, and indeed of this world. I am reminded of the words of the famous British Novelist Charles Dickens in his acclaimed novel, and I quote, “**A Tale of Two Cities**”, a novel set in a time of social upheaval, division and transformation. **I quote “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times....” End quote.**

Although this novel was written over one hundred and sixty (160) years ago, these words remain relevant today. As we celebrate 80 years of the existence of the United Nations, we are living a tale of two worlds.

A Tale of Two Worlds:

For some it is indeed the best of times. Strong economies, access to education, medicines, top class health care, clean water, sanitation, and housing. They are at the frontier of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies, with

expanding digital infrastructure and rising standards of living.

But for many it remains the worst of times: Persistent poverty, growing hunger, displacement, instability and war; nations on the frontlines of climate change, enduring the worst impacts and debt crisis not of their own making, but a price they pay for the excesses of others.

Unfortunately, this is not fiction, but our shared reality. If we as the “United Nations” do not confront this duality, this inequality, we will write a catastrophe of our own.

It bears restating that the UN was created 80 years ago, to prevent wars, to promote peace and international cooperation, based on ideals of mutual respect, human rights and the rule of law. It has championed multilateralism, recognizing that no one country has the

answer for the world's problems, that the world is interconnected, and to maintain peace we should operate a rules-based and not power based approach.

A ***Tale of Two Cities*** portrayed a society where the powerful live in luxury and the oppressed suffer in silence. We can take heed of the warning that we glean from Dickens work, that injustice should not be ignored, that when powerful nations impose their will on the less powerful, without accountability or regard for the rule of law, they plant seeds of discord and future unrest.

What have the lessons taught us? What should we ask ourselves as we gather year after year in this Chamber? Are we truly listening to the nations that take the podium every year to decry poverty, inequality, climate change, underdevelopment and conflict? Do we have a system where resources and decision making are truly being

equitably shared, or are we instead operating a system where power protects itself?

I am reminded of the old African proverb “***When elephants fight the grass gets trampled***”. We the small island developing states, we are that grass. In today’s geopolitical landscape we feel the brunt of the impact when global powers engage in political, economic or military confrontation. Economic sanctions, trade restrictions, aid conditionalities, conflict and wars, to name a few, affect global supply and the affordability, availability and transportation of goods and materials. This significantly increases the cost of doing business and the prices of basic foods on our supermarket shelves, putting several goods out of the price range of many.

We have come here time and time again to advocate for fairness, to advocate for understanding, to advocate for

change, in respect of matters that concern our very viability as small nations; on matters that affect our very lives and livelihoods. A major area for us is the devastating impact of climate change on our nations.

Yet, in climate negotiations powerful nations still drag their feet, polluters enjoy protection, and adaptation and mitigation efforts are underfunded. Meanwhile our countries, which everyone accepts contribute the least to the climate crisis, continue to risk extinction from rising seas, extreme flooding, devastating storms, drought, amongst many other negative impacts of climate change.

How can this be fair? How can this be morally defensible?

While we complain about these things, equally horrifying is the indiscriminate and deliberate loss of life that we see around the world from bombings, from induced hunger,

from sanctioned violence, and genocide. We do not have the power to prevent the storms and to bring the rains where there is drought, but we do have the power to limit further climate change and help countries adapt and mitigate its impact. So too, we have the power to end wars and not start new ones. We have to be willing to talk to each other, to empathize with each other, we should return to the founding principles of the United Nations.

Wherever there is conflict, be it in the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia or sad to say in the Caribbean, major powers engaging in geopolitical conflicts result in civilians becoming collateral damage, economies collapsing, increase in prices and instability. I want to emphasize here today that there is no place in the Caribbean for war. The Caribbean is a Zone of Peace. Any military conflict in the Caribbean will have significant negative impacts on the Caribbean and Latin America.

There is a better way to resolve differences. We urge the powers that be to find another way.

And so, Madam President, I return to our “Tale” where a man dismissed by society gives his life for another- Are the wealthiest nations willing to give up dominance for fairness? To make sacrifices to ensure justice, equity, and climate resilience for all? Will we choose compassion and empathy over control and indifference?

Haiti

Madam President,

We stand in solidarity with the people of Haiti. We insist like other CARICOM Member States, that the current crisis being confronted by our sister CARICOM State, in no way nullifies the entitlement of its people to the recognition of their sacred sovereignty, and their right to be central in the search for a fair and durable peace in their country.

The Government of Dominica remains convinced that our sister CARICOM State, Haiti faces major challenges today in part because of the glorious contribution Haiti made to the quest for justice and freedom in our region and the world. Indeed, the current complexion of this august body would have been unimaginable without the heroic struggles of the Haitians. As such, the crisis in Haiti is much more than a Caribbean crisis, and its solution requires a united response and the support of the United Nations to resolve.

My delegation unreservedly supports the position of CARICOM on the situation in Haiti, a position that rightly calls for a Haitian-led-and-owned transition process, to bring across systematic changes for the benefit of the Haitian people. Let us provide them with all of the support that they need. Nothing less is demanded of us.

CUBA

Madam President,

The Commonwealth of Dominica is keen to underscore its commitment to advocating for unity, justice, peace and the sustainable human development that they foster. In this regard, we continue to urge that the long-running unjust and illegal economic embargo against the people of Cuba be revoked. Maintaining this embargo is harmful, not only to the long-suffering people of Cuba, but also to the image and profile of its sponsors. Cuba like every other country has a right to its self-determination. Dominica continues to stand in solidarity with Cuba.

BLOCKADE

The trade and economic embargo imposed against our brothers and sisters in Cuba, continues to be of great

concern to us in the Caribbean. Its lifting grows increasingly urgent. Therefore, the Commonwealth of Dominica once again joins its voice with the voices of the overwhelming majority of members of this global organization, to call for the immediate lifting of trade restrictions and export bans imposed on the good people of Cuba. They are unjustified! They are unjustifiable! They belong to a bygone era. They should cease to exist. They fall, in our view, within the grand narrative of yet another Caribbean people's struggle for liberation. It is for these reasons that the Government of Dominica strongly urges a radical reconsideration of these actions.

LIST OF STATE SPONSORS OF TERRORISM

Venezuela

Madam President,

Our steadfast advocacy for respect for the United Nations norms of sovereignty and non-interference, impels us as well to urge that the right of the Government and people of Venezuela to resolve internal challenges without outside interference be respected. We renew our condemnation of the imposition of sanctions on Venezuela. The resulting hardship forced upon the people of Venezuela needs an immediate and complete end.

We also call for restraint and strict adherence to the rule of law as relates to the presence of US military assets in the blue waters of the Caribbean Sea. The solution to conflict, to challenges should never be aggression and war. We urge that all diplomatic efforts be pursued to respect the sovereignty of States, preserve the dignity of human life, and promote peace.

Madam President,

As we celebrate this 80th year of these United Nations under the theme, and I quote, “80 years and more for Peace, Development and Human Rights”, end quote, let it not be just mere words. Let it instead be a call for respect and adherence to a rules-based order, that applies to all nations equally, weak and strong, not just when it is convenient to the most powerful.

The UN arose out of the ashes of a world torn by devastating wars. Let us not return to those dark days, but instead be guided by law, diplomacy and shared values.

Let us reform the system where small and developing nations have a real seat at the table. That we may have the opportunity to influence decisions that shape global climate policy, security, and economic well-being for all.

Let it be where we build solidarity and cooperation, and where power is exercised with humility, compassion and restraint.

Let the history books say that in this Chamber, in our time, we chose a better path. In the words of Charles Dickens, and I quote, ***“It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done....”*** *End of quote.*

Let those words not only be the end of a novel but also the beginning of a new era for us, the beginning of our collective resolve, where our actions are guided by the desire for true peace, by respect for others and the rule of law, for upholding the sanctity of human life, of ensuring true development and prosperity for all.

Let us judge the strength of our global system not by how loudly the elephants roar but by how well we protect the grass beneath them.

Excellencies, the challenges before us are too great and complex for any one nation to solve alone. We all need each other. So let us leave this hall committed to action, committed to partnership, and committed to each other. Because the truth is simple, yet profound: we are always stronger, wiser, and better together.

Madam President,

I look forward to the day when a woman leads this great institution as Secretary-general, which to my mind would be a symbol of true equality.

I thank you for the courtesy of your attention.