



THE HON. WINSTON BALDWIN SPENCER
Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda
Chairman, G77 and China

ADDRESS

63RD SESSION OF THE UN
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

September 25, 2008

Please check against delivery.

Señor Miguel D'Es-coto Brock-mann:

I wish, at the outset, to extend heartiest congratulations and assurances of my cooperation and highest esteem to you, on your election to the presidency of the Sixty-third Session of the General Assembly.

Antigua and Barbuda looks forward to your leadership and guidance throughout this session.

Congratulations also to your predecessor Mr. Kerim on a job well done and for his service to the international community.

I venture to express the hope that the G77 and China will find in you a vigorous advocate for heightened focus and meaningful action in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals and other agreed development goals.

The Sixty-third Session of the General Assembly is taking place against a backdrop of escalating challenges to international peace and security; unalleviated poverty and diminishing food supplies for much of the world's population; mega disasters induced by climate change; and impending meltdown in the world's largest economy.

These times and circumstances call for a heightened sense of urgency and a stronger will among all nations to work with and through the United Nations in embracing multilateralism in the fullest sense.

The climate crisis is a clear and present threat to the security of small island-states like ours, and a major obstacle to the achievement of our sustainable development goals and objectives.

The international community is not short of rhetoric on the climate crisis, nor is it short of ideas, but we have come up woefully short of political will on the part of those whose actions matter most.

The nexus of climate change and natural disasters is indisputable. Natural disasters are increasing in frequency and devastation around the globe.

Such disasters are especially catastrophic for the small countries of the Caribbean, whose economies are largely dependent on the natural environment.

I commend the United Nations and its organs for the work they are doing in Haiti and elsewhere in the Caribbean that were severely affected by hurricanes over the past weeks.

I must however call on the international community to lend additional support to the United Nations in its humanitarian efforts in the developing world.

The emerging focus on new energy sources in the United States and elsewhere is also heartening to small nations.

We are encouraged by this promise of a roll back of the primary contributors to the causes of climate change.

The responsibility to provide the necessary resources to do this must be borne primarily by those developed countries, which contribute most to the causes of climate change.

In similar context, Mr. President, vulnerable developing societies are victims to the globalisation of crime; notably in the havoc wrought by handguns in the possession of criminal elements; narco-trafficking targeted, essentially, to markets in developed countries; and the deportation of criminals to our shores.

We urge the international community, in recognition of the link between globalization and crime, to provide greater support for the efforts of small island-states to fight crime, strengthen the rule of law and combat international drug trafficking.

We also call on developed countries to stop the practice of deporting violent criminals to our shores.

I have looked critically at the some of the problems facing the global family of nations.

I conclude on a note of optimism.

We have recently seen a number of leaders apologising to the African Diaspora, to indigenous peoples, and to former colonies for past wrongs and injustices.

We have even seen binding commitment to reparation; as in the case of Italy and Libya.

I salute those leaders who have demonstrated such enlightenment.

More governments are accepting the inevitability of democratic political change, and are showing a growing commitment to good governance; fair and free elections; and the orderly transfer and sharing of power.

Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa come to mind immediately, and deserve commendation.

Finally, it is fascinating how both candidates in the US presidential elections are vying for the change franchise in this country.

As a representative of the Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda, I call on the United States Administration and its future leadership to effect change in its dealings with our brother nation of the Republic of Cuba.

I call on the United States to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on our brothers and sisters in Cuba. As a world leader and defender of justice, the United States must embrace change fully in the interest of the men, women and children of Cuba.

I firmly believe that the United Nations would be a more potent entity and the world could be an infinitely better place if the next President of the United States, in his inaugural address, gave an irrevocable commitment to multilateralism, in all its dimensions.

Permit me in my capacity as the Chair of the Group of 77 and China to offer a few comments on behalf of the group.

The United Nations - and more broadly the international community - has spent much time and other resources over two decades identifying, defining and coming to common understanding on major challenges to the global society.

We have passed resolutions and declarations in which we have defined the challenges, identified the resources needed and resolved and committed to meeting and overcoming the challenges as a global community through international cooperation.

In some cases, we have agreed and set binding timeframes to achieve results.

Many of these commitments, time tables and proposals for action have been repeated in annual resolutions of the General Assembly.

Unfortunately, many have become more technically complicated and with less and less political commitment to unified and mutually reinforcing implementation action.

Mr. President, we have had some modest gains, as for example, in our fight against HIV/AIDS and malaria, but generally our record of implementation and delivery on commitments is a source of embarrassment to us as leaders.

We are confronted by an endemic crisis of development, including the failure of development policies and approaches that do not take into account the specific situation of countries and regions.

This has resulted in growing inequities within and across countries;

An environmental and climate change crisis with unsustainable pressures on production and ecosystems;

A global economic and financial crisis spreading from the major economies;

A crisis of confidence in global governance and institutional capacity for managing international trade, finance and development policies;

A worsening energy crisis;

An unprecedented food crisis; and

A looming water crisis.

Mr. President, we recognize that each country has the primary responsibility for its development.

However, the international community must create a conducive, sustainable, fair and predictable environment and provide the necessary policy space to stimulate and facilitate the discharge of this responsibility.

We must all move immediately into implementation mode - a mode where our focus is on how to do rather than how not to do. We have some important strategic opportunities ahead to begin to do so.

The G77 and China believes that we could begin with today's high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals.

At the midpoint we, as an international community, are in danger of missing most of the MDG targets. We have not provided the resources, the conducive international environment and the cooperation to ensure that all developing countries can meet their specific targets.

Several sources were identified in Monterrey through which the financing could be mobilized to address the commitments to tackle many of the challenges, including those summarized in the Millennium Development Goals.

Let us use the process to the review Conference on Financing for Development in Doha and the Conference itself to offer specific proposals on how we will provide and use the resources and how we will set about shaping the international economic environment to speed achievement of the objectives and targets and the greater participation of the developing countries.

The Bali process reaffirmed in December 2007, to ensure that by the end of 2009 the international community will have a fix on commitments of Annex 1 Parties for GHG reductions for the second commitment period; and on firm actions and resources by Annex 1 Parties to facilitate adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and financing by Non-Annex 1 Parties.

The outcome of Copenhagen must be robust and implementation driven.

The various intergovernmental activities on the energy and food crises scheduled for the coming months should be focused not only on solutions to the immediate problem of food insecurity and energy issues but also to long-term sustainable developmental imperatives.

Mr. President, these are illustrations of the opportunities which can and should be used by the international community to foster implementation of outstanding and new commitments.

They are by no means exhaustive.

The Group of 77 and China would urge the General Assembly to resolve early to send a message of urgency and of implementation to these various processes and activities.

I thank you.